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OR,
Double-Curve Dan's Dead Ball.

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CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERY IN A GRAY VAIL.

THE game was a close one. The "New York Toughs," as they called themselves, had challenged the "Albany Stars," and the "Stars" had gone down to New York to meet their rivals.

The game was being played in a field on the outskirts of Brooklyn, within easy reach of the

BOTH RUFFIANS FELL SUDDENLY AS IF SHOT, WHILE DOUBLE-CURVE DAN STOOD OVER THEM.

Elevated Road, and there was a large attendance. The "New York Toughs" were known as a club that could always take care of itself on the diamond, and as for the "Albany Stars," why, they had polished off some of the best players brought against them, and were inclined to think they could do the same with the "Toughs." So there was no lack of spectators of that desperate contest on this early September afternoon.

The weather was lovely. Not so hot as to make base-running and fielding torture, but warm enough to keep the blood of the boys on the "bleaching boards" up to a comfortable temperature. Everything favored an excellent exhibition and the fullest enjoyment of America's splendid national game.

In the eighth inning it stood 2 to 2, with the Toughs at the bat.

The Toughs were red hot as their best slugger went to the bat.

Red Gabe was a terrific fellow with the bat. When his brawny hands closed upon the implement, it was his boast that "something had to drop."

He was a middle-sized, bullet-headed, small-eyed, red-haired young man, with a voice like a fog-horn, and a temper remarkably short. All these qualities, however, did not prevent his being a valuable member of the New York Toughs' Baseball Club.

"Give us a low ball," he growled as he glared defiantly at the clean, long-limbed young fellow in the pitcher's box. "Let 'er come straight now, and I'll knock 'er clär over in Hoboken."

The young pitcher smiled, and the gleam of mirth could be seen in the steel-blue eyes and in the expression of his fresh young face. He evidently understood Red Gabe, and took his pompous words at their true value.

"Very well. Look out."

For one moment he straightened himself, his right hand lay pressed closely against his thigh, then there was a shock, a flash, like a shot from a cannon, and the ball leaped fiercely across the space between the pitcher's box and the batter. It swerved to the right, then to the left, and then, ere Red Gabe knew where he was or where the pitcher was, or where the ball was, it suddenly whirled to the right, and was in the hands of the catcher.

"Out," cried the umpire.

Red Gabe threw down his bat, and as the next player took it up, walked slowly over to the pitcher and hissed in his ear:

"So, yer' the feller that they call Double-Curve Dan, ain't yer?"

The young man smiled and bowed his head gracefully.

"Yes, I knowed yer was that thar Dan; but let me tell yer right byer, it was the wurst day's work you ever did, whun yer put Red Gabe out with yer sneaking, two-curved balls. Do yer hear me?"

Without waiting for a reply, the Tough turned his back, and slouched over to the bench where the other players were sitting.

Double-Curve Dan, for of course the pleasant-faced young fellow was no other than the famous young Pitcher-Detective, with whom the reader probably is already acquainted, smiled disdainfully as he made ready to give a straight ball for the next Tough.

Valiantly did the Toughs try to retrieve the loss occasioned by the sudden put-out of their best man, but in vain. Whether it was that they were discouraged by the peremptory manner in which he was put out, or whether because Double-Curve Dan, the pitcher of the Albany Stars, pitched his balls with more accuracy than usual, certain it is that the side was retired without scoring a run.

Red Gabe was sitting mute upon the bench, and he did not move as Double-Curve Dan walked over, and sat down beside him, until the umpire called to him to step into the pitcher's box. With a glance of vindictive hate at the smiling young fellow, Gabe seized the ball, and took his place to pitch for his side.

The first man at the bat was Dan.

"Low ball," he said, in a pleasant voice.

"I'll give yer er low ball," muttered Gabe, as he clinched his ugly yellow teeth and shook his head like a wild beast desperate for a meal. "I'll give it to yer. Look out fur me."

Dan knew that he meant mischief, but at once threw himself into a posture of defense with his bat and waited for developments.

Gabe sent the ball flying at him with his strong right arm, and Dan caught it full with his bat and slashed it down into center field.

That really gave to Dan the game, for he made third base with that center-field strike,

and when the side retired there were three runs added to the score of the Albany Stars.

The game being played in Brooklyn, there was as much feeling on the part of the spectators for one club as for the other, so the victory of the Stars was entirely satisfactory to the crowds that slowly surged out of the gate at the end of this exciting contest.

The players were all in one room, changing their ball uniforms for the habiliments of everyday life.

The game was being discussed, of course, but there appeared to be little of that bitter feeling of rivalry which might have been expected under the circumstances.

Only one man seemed to feel his defeat, and to be unable to enjoy the fun.

That was Red Gabe. He was standing behind Dan, putting on his coat and watching the other as he bundled up his uniform preparatory to taking the train for Albany, with the rest of his companions.

"You heerd what I sed on the field, didn't yer?" he whispered in Dan's ear.

"Yes."

"If ye'r' not a coward, yer will meet me tonight at eleven o'clock at Cooney Maul's place in the Bowery. I've somethin' to say to yer."

"Say to me?"

"Yes, to yer. Yer needn't think that I don't know that yer hev another business besides playing ball. Yer needn't flatter yerself I don't know ye'r'a—"

"Hush!" said the other quickly, putting up his hands to stop Gabe's talk.

Red Gabe grinned sarcastically.

"Yer see that I know too much for yer."

"I do not know that you do, either. I am not ashamed of my profession, but I don't care to have every durned jackass braying it to the public; that is all."

"Well, will yer meet me as I asked yer?"

The young man hesitated for a moment, and then something in the Tough's eye seemed to sting him, for he replied hastily. "Yes, I will; but let me warn you that I shall come in my character of a—"

"Wal, why don't yer go on?"

"It is unnecessary. You know what I mean," and Dan left the dressing-room and the field. His companions in the same club were used to his erratic movements, and took no particular notice except to smile knowingly, and to hurry their own preparations for their departure to Albany.

Red Gabe finished his dressing slowly, and when he was about ready to leave the dressing-room, there was only one other occupant. He was a small man of perhaps sixty years of age—his shriveled, yellow face was overshadowed by long, white hair. The casual observer might have taken him for a studious old philosopher, but one glance of his pale blue eyes with their leering, cunning expression was enough to show the spectator that Sol Nugent was neither saint nor philanthropist. There was something strongly suggestive of the vulture in the way his hooked nose came over his tight mouth, and still more of it in the stealthy movements of his long, claw-like fingers, as he rubbed one hand over another, looking the while steadfastly into Red Gabe's face.

"Yer old monkey, what yer staring at me in that way fur?"

"Don't git mad, Gabe, my dear. You shouldn't jump into the old man for bein' old. That's my only fault, I guess."

"Tis, eh? Wal, they will never heng yer fur that. All the same, I don't think yer'll ever be drowned."

"Wal, Gabe, yer er a great joker," wheezed the old hawk.

"Thet's enuf of yer chinnin'. Let's git out of hyar."

Sol, who was the keeper of the base-ball grounds, carefully locked the dressing-room, as well as the outer gate, while Red Gabe carelessly slouched on, and left him to follow if he were so inclined.

The two had reached the corner of the street, on which the ball-grounds were, and Gabe was walking along with his eyes bent upon the ground, when, suddenly, he ran plump into a young girl, whose face was covered by a thick, gray veil, and who was coming swiftly around the corner from an opposite direction.

Gabe was about to make a clumsy apology, when Sol, reaching forward, seized the girl by the arm, and in a state of the wildest excitement tried to give utterance to some words. Vainly however, for he was only able to gasp incoherently.

"Yer old piece of baggage! What er yer doing to ther girl? demanded Gabe.

"Gabe—Gabe—don't yer know? don't yer understand? This ere's—"

What the old man would have said further can only be surmised, for two fists suddenly appeared on the scene, one of them planted in the old man's chin, and the other squarely between the eyes of Red Gabe. Both ruffians fell suddenly while if shot, while Double-Curve Dan stood over them, and looked around in a bewildered way to see what had become of the girl. She had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed her up.

CHAPTER II.

THE ABDUCTION.

ON Myrtle avenue, Brooklyn, there was—and is for that matter—a small, dark store in which musical instruments are sold made and repaired. The stock is like the store, small. A few accordions, dozens of mouth-organs, some decrepit looking fiddles, and a gleam of brass instruments in the shadows at the back, are all that give token of the business transacted. And yet this store is one of the not more than three or four in the whole United States, where odd musical instruments of original patterns and differing entirely from those of conventional make, can be procured.

Theatrical people know the store well. Do they want an umbrella or a broom which, besides keeping off the rain or snow or sweeping floors, provide sweet melodies at the will of the owner, they come to this old place. Harmonic paving-stones, bells tuned to the musical scale, blocks of wood that will play anything from "Sweet Violets" to Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words" can be obtained here by merely leaving the order.

Behind the store is a little room, even darker than that in front. Here is a bench, a forge, files, and other tools for making anything from silver, wood, steel, brass, or string.

On the evening of the ball game described in our last chapter, a little old man, with a bald head fringed just above the ears and at the back with a red growth of hair, stood behind the counter, peering through the glass door into the murky night. A pair of spectacles was on his nose and a short clay pipe ornamented his mouth.

"Faith, Oi wunder where the grrrl kin be. She don't sthay out as late as this offen."

The old man voyaged up and down the narrow space behind the counter, occasionally tweaking the strings of a violin or playing with the keys of an accordion—it seemed to be a way of relieving his feelings as he grumbled again and again—"Where kin the grrrl be?"

Suddenly his eyes brightened through the spectacles, and he made a movement toward the door, but stopped himself just as it burst open and the girl with the gray veil came in, breathless, flushed, and evidently frightened.

"Oh, dad!" she cried, as she sunk upon a low stool used for the accommodation of customers.

The little old man drew himself up stiffly, and in severe tones demanded:

"Marion Ward, phwat do ye m'ané by bu'sting into the house loike an elephant with the gout? Faith, Oi've a great moind to turn yez out agen. If it wuzn't fur yer mither's sake Oi would."

He jammed his hands into his pockets and went on muttering:

"Oi'll have discipline in my house in spite of all the grrrls in Brooklyn."

Although he looked so fierce and talked so savagely to himself, there was a twinkle in his eye that would indicate to any ordinary observer that he was not as mad as he pretended to be. The girl sat on the stool with her face in her hands for perhaps a minute, then suddenly rising, she ran around the counter and threw her arms around the old man's neck.

"Oh, dad, I have seen him again!"

"Seen who?" The old man's tones were savage enough now in real earnest.

"Seen who?" he repeated; "that murtherin' spalpeen of—of a—"

"Yes, dad, Gabriel Kerr."

He threw her away from him, tore off his spectacles, and dashed up and down the little space behind the counter like a madman.

"Where is he? By the blazes, I'll turn 'im in side out. I'll tache him to come here and frighten my darter. I'll put him in the Pinetery. I'll—"

The old man said no more. His indignation was too much for him.

Marion went up to him and placing her two hands on his shoulders gently, said:

"Never mind, dad. I ought not to tease you about it, but I was so frightened—"

"Es it frightened you were?" chimed in a

other voice, as the door leading into the old back workshop opened, and a buxom matron with a cheery, jolly face stepped forward.

"Tim," she exclaimed turning toward the old man, "phwat's ails yez that yer hev been frightening the grrul? Yedon't know anything except to make those squakers and things that yez sell in the store. Phwat hev ye bin doing to her?"

"Shura, it ain't me, Katie. It wuz that devil, Red Gabe."

"Ah, shure, and is it that scoundrel ag'in? Marion come and tell me all about it. Come on."

Through the doorway into the little back shop, and then from that into a small parlor, Mrs. Kate Martin, for that was her full name, led Marion.

"And now, don't ye say a wurd till Oi get ye a cup o' tay and then tell me all about it."

"Yes, and I'll listen to it too," put in the little old man, who had followed his wife and daughter into the parlor.

"Phwat are ye's doing here, Tim? Ye are laving the bizness to run itself these days, ain't yer?" demanded his wife.

"No, Boggs has jist come in from his supper and Oi want to hear the story."

It was a peculiarity of this married couple that they were always quarreling and yet were the best of friends.

It seemed to be recreation to them to bark and snap and snarl at each other without meaning it. There was no more bad feeling between them than there is on the part of the drummer when he bangs away at a base drum. It may produce sound, but no pain.

Katie hustled about and in a very few minutes they sat down to supper with appetites that did full justice to Mrs. Martin's cuisine. Even Marion, troubled as she was, partook of the meal with the healthy appetite of a young girl.

Gradually she told her adventure to her father and mother. They listened attentively, and at its conclusion Tim said:

"Oi don't like the idea of that young feller being about on all occasions. Oi thinks he m'anies mischief."

"Who do ye m'ane, Tim," asked Katie, gulping down a half-cup of tea thoughtfully.

"Why, that base-ball feller with the curly hair they call 'Double-Curve Dan.' Oi belave that he's in Red Gabe's gang. Indade, Oi see him with him all the time."

Tim did not always speak the truth when excited.

"Yes, dad, I am more afraid of him than I am of Gabriel. I know that some night I shall be taken back to that horrible place that I see so often in my dreams, that I shall never forget sleeping or waking."

"Don't think of it. Take another cup of tay."

Tea was Mrs. Martin's panacea for all ills. Tim sat quietly by the side of the stove, lost in thought, while Marion dutifully assisted her mother in clearing away the dishes, and straightening the little room. At last he started up with a look of determination in his face.

"Oi'll do it," he exclaimed, bringing his fist down upon the table with a bang.

"Ye will do phwat?"

"Oi'll go fur him."

"Faith, and ye'll do no sich thing."

"Who'll sthop me?"

"Oi will."

"Ye'r' not man enough."

"Wait now, and Oi'll show ye."

"Oi guess ye can, but Oi wish you will let me go," said Tim resignedly, as he sat down in his old place by the stove.

"Where do ye want to go?"

"To find Red Gabe."

"And phwat good will that do?"

"It'll do me good."

"Yes, it would by coming back with a broken head."

"Not before Oi give him a broken head."

"Ye are a fule, Tim."

"Oi am, if ye say so."

During this passage of arms, Marion had sat smiling at the two participants. She rather enjoyed such incidents, because they did no harm to anybody, and were amusing.

"Wal, Katie, won't ye let me go and hunt up the other scoundrel, Double-Curve Dan?"

"Phwat fur?"

"Why, Oi'll make him answer fur phwat he hez done. Phwat right had he to drag our darter into a fight at the corner of the strate?"

"Oh, but he didn't," interposed Marion, who felt that injustice was being done to the young man. "He didn't drag me into a fight at all. Though I am afraid of him, I must admit that but for him I might have been killed, for I am

sure that Red Gabe meant murder when he looked at me."

"Oi don't care. He hed no right to knock down a man on the corner of the strate whin ye wer' stinding by. He should've waited till ye hed gone away an' thin he might hev killed all the men he wanted."

"You're right, Tim," put in Kate, who was secretly proud of her little lord's heroic sentiments. "But I don't see what you could do if yer did mate ther young feller."

"Do? If Oi only hed him here, Oi'd—"

But, at this instant the door opened and an overgrown boy with a large head, dark-yellowish skin, a snub nose, wonderfully large hands and feet, stepped into the room. The boy gradually opened his mouth, and from it slowly issued these words:

"Boss—he's—here."

"Who's here? Opin yer mouf, ye little devil, an' tell."

Again the boy's mouth slowly opened, and he gasped, yet more slowly, as he pointed over his shoulder, "Him."

Perhaps the boy would have said more, but he was suddenly pushed aside, and Double Curve Dan stood in the doorway.

"Excuse me, Mr. Martin," he said in his cheery way, "but I was anxious to see you, and Mr. Boggs here seemed likely to take all the evening to announce me, so, I thought that I would just come forward myself."

Tim stood with his mouth open, looking at the young detective in a state of intense wonderment. Marion had happened to step behind the door of a small cupboard just before Boggs and the detective entered, and her mother kept her there by a warning gesture.

"Now, Tim, phwat are ye goin' ter do ter 'im?" asked Kate, with a look of sarcasm on her usually pleasant face.

The detective looked from one to the other, but of course had no idea what the words meant.

"Ye jist wait a minute, Kate, an' ye'll see."

Dan beckoned to the old man, and they went out into the workshop between the parlor and the front store. It was quite dark now outside, and a single gas-jet, burning feebly, was all the illumination in the old shop. The forges, cold and silent, looked ghostly in the shadow; the files, benches, and other paraphernalia loomed up here and there like specters; a rat scampered over a pile of loose tools and rattled them in a way that would seem to a nervous person like the rattling of the chains of the specters that are supposed to be the ornaments and property of haunted houses.

But neither Tim Martin nor Dan Manly were nervous. Tim was wondering what the detective wanted with him, and Dan was feeling in his pocket for something.

Suddenly he drew out a six-shooter and held it up in front of Tim's face, looking him full in the eyes.

Tim was too afraid to move, but he stammered:

"Phwat in thunderation do ye want with me? Is it robbery ye'r' after, or is it murther yer want ter do? Take that ther' gun from me, or, by ther saints, Oi'll hev ther law on yer. If Oi raise my voice, my old woman will come out here, and she won't leave a cursed slice of yer."

The detective laughed heartily.

"Why, what do you think I am going to do?"

"Faith, but it's ther devil I know."

"I want you to repair this, that is all."

Tim reached for the revolver, and laying it on the bench, yelled savagely in Dan's ear:

"Why didn't yer say so, then? This 'ere coming in a mon's house, bringing dismay with yer weapons and yer guns, Oi'll not stand, and Oi'll hev ther law on ye. Phwat's the matter with ther gun?"

Even as he spoke his quick mechanic's eye had seen what was the trouble, and, taking no more notice of the detective, he was soon tinkering away at the revolver, while Dan looked on.

In about fifteen minutes when the revolver was ready for use again, Tim handed it over to his customer, who soon filled the six chambers with cartridges and put the weapon with a satisfied air into his pocket.

"How much is it?" he asked.

"It will cost you yer life," put in a hoarse voice. At the same instant a heavy blow descended upon the young detective's head, and he fell prostrate in the filings and debris of the workshop.

Ere Tim realized that the stranger had entered, he himself received a blow that sent him bounding against the door of the parlor, burst it open, and threw him into his wife's arms.

"Now, come hyar, girl!" said the voice again,

and Marion found herself in the arms of a powerful man, who bore her from the store, and into a close carriage waiting outside, muffling her face with a heavy overcoat, so that she could not have screamed even had she had the presence of mind to do so.

"I—wonder—what—that fellow—wants—with—Marion," observed Boggs, in a matter-of-fact sort of way as he stood with his hands in his pockets and his mouth open, staring at the carriage dashing along toward Fulton street.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

THE old, dilapidated carriage dashed down Fulton street until it reached the ferry dock, and ran aboard a boat that lay there in the slip. It was not until the boat was nearly over on the New York side of the river that the abductor of Marion removed the coat from her face, and chuckled as he said:

"Got yer ag'in! I'll teach yer to run away from yer home, from them that are good to yer, from them that hez yer interests at 'art—"

"Red Gabe!" gasped the girl.

"Ther very indiwiddle. Ther struck it right ther fu'st time."

Marion made a movement as if she would spring from the carriage, but ere she could do so her wrist was roughly grasped by Gabe, and she was thrust back into her seat.

"Don't yer try nothin' of that thar kind. I may git right tearing mad, and if you say a word, I'll—" His face grew perfectly fiendish, although it was too dark for her to see how much so, as he went on, "I'll choke yer!"

And he meant what he said.

"Oh, mother!" moaned the poor girl again.

"Wal, I be going ter take yer ter yer mother, don't I tell yer?"

She saw it was of no use to plead with him, and not another word passed between them as the river was crossed, and the carriage went up and down the many cross-streets of the lower part of New York, evidently more for the purpose of misleading the girl, if that were possible, than for anything else, for after driving about half an hour, they came back to a place within a block of the ferry dock on the New York side. Then it stopped, and Red Gabe unceremoniously wrapped the overcoat around the girl again, drawing it tightly over her face, in spite of her desperate struggle for freedom.

Gabe took no more notice of her wishes in the matter than if she had been a doll. He threw open the door, clasped her in his arms, and stepped out. The driver whipped up his horses, and disappeared in the darkness, as if he thoroughly understood his business.

The street was entirely deserted. The big warehouses which lined each side were closed. The laborers who had been so busy all day long had gone home. Not a soul was to be seen in the street. It was quite dark, and the heavy fog which rose from the river added to the ordinary gloom of night. Even had Marion been able to make a sound, there was evidently no one near to hear her.

Red Gabe looked cautiously up and down as he held the girl tightly in a dark doorway, with the overcoat still muffling her face.

Then he took her up in his arms again, and suddenly lunged across the street to where iron bars up and down the windows of a narrow slip of a store allowed barrels and jugs to be seen within by the light of a solitary gas-jet. The fog was so thick that the store and the light were entirely invisible from the other side of the street, and seemed to come into view almost like an enchanted palace as Red Gabe crossed over.

There was a cellar-flap of iron in front of the store, and upon this Gabe tapped twice with the heel of his heavy boot. Almost instantaneously there was a shuffling noise underneath. It might have been the scratching of a rat, but Gabe knew better. Meaningless as the shuffling sounded, it spoke as plainly to the tough as if it had been a human voice.

It asked: "Who is it?"

Gabe tapped again on the iron flap and by the peculiar sound he made conveyed the answer: "Red Gabe."

Marion was now lying in the tough's arms limp and motionless, and he knew that she had fainted. As this suited his purpose just then as well as anything could, he only chuckled as the iron cellar lid was cautiously pushed up, revealing a black hole that might have been the entrance to Hades, as a squeaky voice admonished the tough to "hurry up, mein tear, und come down."

Without hesitation, Red Gabe stepped into the black hole, although for anything he could see

he might have been going to drop ten, twenty, or a hundred feet. But he didn't. There was a flight of stone steps leading below, and he walked easily down them into the pitchy darkness, with the unconscious Marion in his arms. Then the iron trap-door was quickly dropped and it seemed as if with its muffled clang, it rung the knell of the young girl's hopes of ever seeing her friends in the world again.

Red Gabe counted his steps until he had descended ten. Then he marched forward, with the owner of the squeaky voice paddling along behind him.

"Who's here?" asked Gabe, suddenly, without turning his head.

"No one but her mudder, mein tear. She is all by her own self," responded the squeaky voice.

"All right Sol. Open the door."

These words came from the thick darkness, in front of Gabe, muffled as from another room. Almost immediately, a blinding glare of light was shed upon the tough, with the girl in his arms, and the weazened form of Sol Nugent appeared in the doorway of a warm, well-lighted room, furnished like a comfortable kitchen and bedroom combined, while in the perspective a red-faced elderly woman, stout of figure and cold of eye, sat rocking herself in front of the large cook-stove.

Red Gabe marched on with the air of a man who knew the place thoroughly, and handed the girl, bundled up as she was in the overcoat, to the old woman, as if she were merely an inanimate parcel.

"There's something fer yer, Mother Collins. Take better care uv it than yer did afore," he growled, as he dropped into a low chair and coolly began to fill a short clay pipe he took from his pocket.

Mother Collins held Marion on one of her brawny arms as she pulled the coat from her face, just as the girl gave some faint signs of life.

"Sakes alive! An' hev yer got her ag'in? Wal, Gabe, ye'r a great one! Whar did yer git her? Why, Mary, my pet, I'm very glad ter see yer."

At every sentence the woman gave Marion a sharp slap on the face with a spitefulness that would have made any honest man feel justified in killing Mother Collins off-hand. But there was no honest man in her kitchen just then, and Sol and Gabe enjoyed the proceeding too much to interfere.

"Serves her right," was all that Red Gabe said, as he puffed away at the strong tobacco that made the already close atmosphere of the kitchen almost unbearable.

"So it do, mein tear! so it do!" acquiesced Sol Nugent, rubbing his yellow hands together in ecstasy. "Arter all the trouble she's given her friends, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up with yer croaking, will yer?" interrupted Mother Collins, angrily. "The gal is coming to. Whar am I goin' ter put her? It ain't safe ter keep her hyer if any one is arter her."

"Thar ain't no one arter her," observed Gabe with a leer. "Ther job wuz done too slick fer that. Thar ain't no one ez knows who took her, an' I fixed things so ez no one followed us, you kin be sure of that."

"Wal, yer ain't a-answerin' my question. Whar am I ter put her?"

"Put her down the cellar, fer anything I care," replied Gabe, impatiently. "But mind ez yer hev her ready ag'in' I want her. Thet's all."

He stepped over to a closet in a corner, and taking therefrom a bottle of beer and a good-sized meat pie, brought them to the table and prepared to take a meal.

Sol Nugent was not a whit behind in this respect. He brought two plates, glasses and knives and forks from the closet, and busied himself in pouring out the beer and handing the plates while Red Gabe attacked the pie. In another minute both Sol and Gabe were eating and drinking with a gusto natural to men who had had nothing for several hours. Red Gabe, in particular, who had not taken any refreshment since the ball game in Brooklyn, plied a most valiant knife and fork, with Sol Nugent a very good second in the race.

Mother Collins took no notice of the two men. They were evidently doing something that they were used to, and were quite at home. Besides she was occupied too much with Marion.

The golden hair of the girl had escaped from its coil and fallen in a shower of floss about her face and shoulders. Her brown eyes looked beseethingly up into the face of the old woman, but dropped again as she realized how utterly useless it was to expect mercy in those cold gray

eyes that seemed to pierce her through and through.

"So, yer baggage! Yer hev come to yer senses, hev yer?" croaked Mother Collins. "Now stir yerself, 'cause I ain't got no time ter fool with yer."

Thus saying, she dragged Marion by the wrist to the extremity of the kitchen, and unlocking a door, took her into a cold, damp apartment that caused a chill to pass through her, as the result of the sudden change of temperature from the close kitchen.

Barrels and boxes of bottles almost filled the place, a flaring gas-light in an iron cage, such as is seen on the stage of a theater, showing up the objects near it with a perspective of darkness in the background, seemed to run into an infinity of space. There was a strong smell of alcohol, and a sweet, glutinous deposit upon everything told of the presence of wines, some of whose sugary properties had escaped in spite of every care.

"Come along," growled Mother Collins, who had never released Marion's wrist since taking it.

The girl, weak and sick, could not resist, but suffered herself to be led into the darkness without a word of remonstrance.

"Git down hyar."

Mother Collins had suddenly stopped and pulled up a trap-door by an iron ring that was quite invisible, but that she found easily in the darkness, knowing exactly where to feel for it.

The girl drew back as a rush of cold air struck her face, and made her loose hair blow hither and thither, but a push from the old woman's hand sent her into the hole, and before she could collect her thoughts she found herself stumbling down a flight of stone steps, fortunately neither steep nor narrow, while a heavy clang told her that the heavy trap had been closed above her.

She ran up the steps in an agony of terror and strove to push up the trap-door, but it was as firm as a rock, and her feeble attempts to remove it were of no more avail than if she had tried to raise the house itself.

"What shall I do?" she wailed. "What shall I do? Oh, my father! shall I ever see you again?"

Then with a setting of her teeth and a compression of her lips that would have told any spectator, had there been one, that she had determined to cast aside her natural maidenly fears and bear with her misfortunes until the opportunity came for action, she went boldly down the steps into the awful darkness.

She had no idea where she was, for although she had been in the kitchen before, having in fact escaped from the clutches of Mother Collins some two months before, she had never been permitted to go beyond the door at the end of that apartment, and had no idea that the place she was in now had ever existed.

How and why she had been 'in the power of Mother Collins, and how she had escaped, will be explained in detail further along.

"Now, let me think," she murmured, as she gained the bottom of the steps, and found herself standing upon a floor of hard, but rather damp earth. "Let me think. The place above is of course a warehouse belonging to the liquor dealer above. No doubt about that. Probably that warehouse has a back way, for the convenience of getting the barrels in and out. It must be very near the river, if that is the case." It will be seen that Marion Ward, young as she was, could work out facts logically enough when she went to work coolly to do it.

"Now the question is, what place is this that I am in? It does not seem to be a warehouse, for although I am walking slowly along, with my hands out, I have not touched anything yet, and if there were barrels or boxes here, surely I should have come in collision with them before this. Ah, here is a wall—a rough stone wall! I will follow it along and try and get a reliable idea of the size of the room."

It took Marion perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes to grope her way around her prison. Then she knew that it was an empty room or cellar about twenty feet square, with one door that felt like iron, in a corner, besides the trap door at the top of the stone steps by which she had entered.

Tired by her exertions of feeling her way around in the dark, for she was still very weak, she had just seated herself on the lowest of the stone steps to rest and think.

"Why do they keep me here?" she mused. "What can Mother Collins and Red Gabe want me for? They took me away from my father, and managed to make him think I had been taken to London: they kept me a close prisoner until I escaped that day when they forgot to

lock the outside cellar door after they went out. Then I found my old friends, Tim and Kate Martin, and they have been like father and mother to me, ever since. Oh, I must get back to them! My father has heard that I am safe with them, and even now he is on the Atlantic, on his way home to his daughter, as he thinks. Yes, he must—he must—find me ready to fly into his arms when he does come. I must get out of this place! Hist! What is that?"

She strained her eyes and ears and fancied she heard a slight creaking in the corner where she knew the iron door was.

"Yes, it is—it is—the creaking of a key in a rusty lock. Who can it be—friend or enemy?"

Yes, that was the vital question for the maiden. Was it a friend or an enemy?

The creaking became more and more pronounced, and the sound of a bolt shooting back told that the key had performed its office.

Then the door in the corner toward which Marion's eyes were turned, although she had not been able to see anything but blackness, swung partly open, and the rays of a railroad lantern flashed on her face.

With a cry she started to her feet.

"Boggs!"

"Yes—Miss—Marion—it's—Boggs—sure—enough!" drawled that individual, as, with his lantern hugged in his arms, he deliberately stepped into the room, and pulled the iron door shut after him.

CHAPTER IV.

"A STERN CHASE IS A LONG CHASE."

LET US GO BACK TO THE LITTLE WORKSHOP AT THE BACK OF THE MUSICAL-INSTRUMENT STORE ON MYRTLE AVENUE, BROOKLYN.

THE SUDDEN KNOCKING DOWN OF THE DETECTIVE AND TIM MURPHY WAS ENOUGH TO CAUSE SOME EXCITEMENT IN A QUIET FAMILY AND IT CERTAINLY DID SO.

FOR PERHAPS A MINUTE AFTER THE STRANGER HAD LAID OUT DOUBLE-CURVE DAN AND TIM MARTIN IN SUCH A WORKMANLIKE MANNER, KATE MARTIN STOOD UTTERLY DUMFOUNDED. THEN SHE RECOVERED HERSELF WITH A JERK, AND STOOPING TO RAISE HER HUSBAND TO HIS FEET—FOR HE HAD SLIPPED OUT OF HER ARMS TO THE FLOOR—LOOKED SUSPICIOUSLY AT THE PROSTRATE FORM OF THE DETECTIVE AMONG THE STEEL FLINGS AND OTHER RUBBISH.

"OI DUUNO 'BOUT YEZ," SHE MUTTERED. "AN' I DOUBT WHETHER YEZ ARE NOT IN WID THOT IOTHER BLAUGUARD, FOR ALL THOT YE AIR PURTENDIN' TER BE KNOCKED SILLY."

"IS IT SILLY, YE SAY?" ASKED TIM, AS HE FELT HIS HEAD TO MAKE SURE THAT IT WAS NOT KNOCKED OFF. "FAITH! IF HE GOT A LICK LIKE THE ONE THAT WAS FED TO ME IT'S A WONDER IF HE HAS ANY BRAINS LEFT AT ALL, AT ALL."

"STOP YER BLATHERING, WILL YEZ?" INTERRUPTED KATIE. "I KNOW MY BIZNESS."

She examined the young detective by rolling him over so that she could look into his face. Then she drew back as she muttered: "Ef it wuz part uv the schame, bedad, I shouldn't like ter have had his in' i uv it to do. I belave that tap on the head has knocked all the sines out uv him."

But, she was mistaken. Dan had been stunned but he was recovering now, and in a few seconds he was standing up, and looking around him inquiringly.

"MARION! WHERE IS SHE?" WERE HIS FIRST WORDS.

"OHO! LOOK AT THAT NOW!" EJACULATED KATIE. "DIDN'T I THINK YE KNEW SOMETHIN' ABOUT IT? PHWAT DO YE KNOW 'BOUT OUR MARION, NOW?"

THE GOOD-NATURED MRS. MARTIN DID NOT LOOK VERY AMIABLE NOW AS SHE STOOD IN FRONT OF THE DETECTIVE AND LOOKED HIM SQUARELY IN THE EYE.

"I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HER NOW, NOR MORE DO YOU GOOD PEOPLE, I IMAGINE. I RECOGNIZED RED GABE AT THE MOMENT HE STRUCK ME, AND I KNOW THAT HE WAS AFTER MARION WARD. DID HE TAKE HER?"

THE YOUNG MAN'S TONES WERE QUIET AND HIS MANNER COOL AND COLLECTED, BUT THERE WERE RESENTMENT AND DETERMINATION BLAZING IN HIS STEEL-BLUE EYES, AND IT WOULD HAVE AUGURED ILL FOR GABE HAD HE BEEN WITHIN REACH OF DOUBLE-CURVE DAN JUST THEN.

HE DID NOT WAIT FOR A REPLY, BUT DASHING FROM THE LITTLE WORKSHOP INTO THE STORE, OVERTURNING TWO OR THREE VIOLINS AND A DOZEN OR SO OF MOUTH-ORGANS ON THE WAY, HE SAW THAT THE STORE WAS EMPTY AND THE DOOR OPEN.

TO GAIN THE DOORWAY WAS THE WORK OF A SECOND, AND TO LOOK UP AND DOWN THE STREET FOR SOME SIGNS OF RED GABE OR MARION THAT OF ANOTHER. BUT, NOTHING WAS TO BE SEEN OF EITHER.

ALL HE DID SEE THAT WAS OF ANY PARTICULAR INTEREST TO HIM WAS BOGGS, RACING AROUND THE COR-

ner to the right into Fulton street, at a speed that no one would have thought the boy capable of, had he looked at his ungainly, awkward limbs, and heard his painfully slow speech.

But, it was a fact—of which Double-Curve Dan was well aware—that Boggs (Montgomery Boggs, when he was given his full name, which had happened perhaps three or four times during his entire life,) was one of the best amateur runners in Brooklyn, especially for long distances from three to ten miles, in which he had beaten some very good men at the Polo Grounds on a memorable occasion a year ago, when he had astonished a number of professional sports who were disposed to laugh at Boggs's ridiculous figure until they were obliged to admit his ability.

"He's going at a tremendous gait," muttered the detective, and he would not be doing it without an object. "I'll bet anything he is following Red Gabe and Marion! Of course—of course, I see it all. It was a regularly-planned job. They have a carriage or some other vehicle, and Boggs is following it. Then, obviously, I must follow Boggs."

The boy was around the corner and out of sight long ago, for the detective had been walking at only an ordinary pace toward the corner as he cogitated. But now he quickened his pace and dashed down the middle of Fulton street on the track of Boggs.

At first he could not see anything of the boy, for the wagons, horse-cars and other vehicles that at that time in the evening were still plentiful. But soon the many electric and other lights shone upon the rough hair of the devoted Boggs a long way ahead, bobbing about among the horses and wagons, but ever pursuing its way toward the river.

"Now for a run," said Dan to himself as he put forth all his strength in a burst of speed that he soon found was enabling him to gain slowly but surely upon the flying Boggs.

The race, of course, soon attracted attention. First came Boggs, lanky, angular, wild-eyed and open-mouthed. He was running in the professional manner that he had been taught since his race at the Polo Grounds, with his elbows at his side and his clinched fists moving backward and forward with the regularity of a machine. His big feet got out of the track occasionally, but he held on his course nevertheless, at a speed that told.

Idlers on the street cheered him, car-drivers and teamsters swore at him, dogs got between his feet and barked at him. But, he held on!

He was within an ace of being crushed between the ponderous wheels of a heavy dray and a lamp-post, but did not pause in his gait.

He yelled in the enthusiasm of the moment, and the conductor of a street-car stopped his vehicle for Boggs, following up the action with a growl as he saw that Boggs did not ride.

The boy took no notice! He never permitted himself to lose sight of the carriage, although sometimes, owing to the maze of traffic, all he could discern was the rusty dented old hat of the driver as he urged his horses toward the ferry dock.

Boggs was not gaining much upon the carriage, but he was a little, because he could worm in and out of small spaces, while the carriage was frequently almost stopped as it got into a block of other vehicles.

As for Double-Curve Dan, he was in for a steady race. He managed to keep the boy in sight, and he hoped to overhaul him before he had covered many blocks.

"Because if I do not do it soon, I shall not be able to do it at all."

He put a little more activity into his heels as he thus reflected, and jumped clear over a small newsboy who suddenly came in his path in a stooping posture, picking up a penny that had been thrown to him from the platform of a passing street-car for an evening paper.

Boggs, as if he knew that the detective was quickening his pace (although of course he didn't), put on a spurt, too, and the two kept the relative distance apart that had been sustained since the race began.

"Halooa, there! Stop! Where are yer goin'?" suddenly yelled a burly police officer, who had been strolling quietly up Fulton street, apparently not noticing anything in particular.

The detective took no heed of the officer, but, taking the sidewalk for a few yards, sprung again into the road and dashed away.

"Stop, I tell yer!"

"Can't!" cried the detective over his shoulder, still running at full speed.

"Yer can't, eh?"

"No."

"Yer can't?" repeated the officer, boiling with

indignation, as he joined in the chase, but with the sole object of catching Dan.

"You heard what I said," returned the young detective, carelessly.

This last observation capped the climax. The big policeman determined to arrest that impudent rascal, as he mentally called Double-Curve Dan, cost what it might. He pattered along the flagstones at a very creditable rate, considering his weight and dignity, and although he did not gain upon the detective, managed to hang upon his heels in a very annoying way.

The detective looked back, and saw that he was followed, but it did not trouble him particularly.

"I'll soon get away from him," he muttered. "All that worries me is to keep that boy in view."

He hurried along for perhaps a hundred yards, with the policeman lumbering on behind, when suddenly the vehicles in the road became involved in such a block that he saw he could not get through them. Worse than that, there was some sort of advertising dodge in the window of a store on the right-hand side of the street—a miniature theatrical exhibition—which had attracted a solid mass of people, while on the other two men were fighting in the midst of a struggling mob, who were watching the battle with extreme interest.

"Confound it! What shall I do now?" thought Dan. "That idiot behind me will catch me before I can get through the mob, and I dare not tell him who I am."

The policeman saw at the same moment that the young fellow he was chasing could not get away, and he uttered an exulting "Whoop!" as he put on a little extra steam.

The detective looked hastily around for some avenue of escape, but in vain. He was caught like a rat in a trap.

"Hang the officiousness of these stupid!" he muttered. "Always interfering in matters that do not concern them, and neglecting their legitimate duties to do it."

Double-Curve Dan was mad; he could just see Boggs's head in the distance, bobbing further and further away, and he ground his teeth with vexation.

"Deuce take it! What shall I do?"

The burly policeman was almost upon him now, and already the blue-coated arm was stretched ready to grasp the intended prisoner as soon as he came within reach.

A sudden thought struck Dan.

"If I could only attract that boy's attention, he might stop long enough for me to catch him, and then we could both hunt together—when I have got rid of this fool of a policeman."

It was the habit of the young detective to think and act quickly.

An old woman with a basket of apples happened to be standing on the edge of the crowd. Dan rushed toward her and, drawing a silver quarter from his pocket, thrust it into her hand. Then, before she could recover from her surprise, he had snatched an apple from her basket and hurled it with all his force at the bobbing head of the devoted Boggs, far ahead in the wilderness of horses and wagons.

Double-Curve Dan's aim was true. We know already that when he threw a base-ball at a mark he generally hit it, and that he had not gained his reputation as one of the phenomenal pitchers of the day without good reason. When he sent the apple after Boggs, he meant to hit him plumbly in the back of the head, and he succeeded. He smiled grimly as he saw the apple fly into fragments against the boy's skull, and then he made a dive for a small opening that he had just noticed in the surging crowd around the two fighting men upon the sidewalk.

But the policeman was upon him.

"I have yer now, yer scallawag!" howled the dignified official, as his hand reached the detective's collar.

"Well, hold me tight, do!"

"I will that!"

The coolness of the detective maddened the big officer the more. He tightened his grasp upon the collar and gave it a sudden wrench that brought Dan to a sudden stop.

"Now, do you think I have yer?" chuckled the cop.

Dan did not answer. He could not spare the time to go to the police station with the officer just now, especially as Boggs had stopped running and was looking back as if trying to comprehend who had struck him with the apple.

"Now, for a trick I learned at school!"

With a dexterous movement he tore himself from the policeman's hold, and, at the same instant seized him by the collar with his right hand while his left grasped the right elbow of

the policeman. Then there was a momentary tightening of the detective's muscles, and the policeman fell ignominiously across his young assailant's hip and went spinning, like a very large sack of potatoes or flour, into the midst of the people interested in the other fight.

Without waiting to see how the policeman liked his experience, Dan dashed away—the road being cleared now—in the direction of Boggs, who had resumed his chase of the carriage.

"Now I will catch him," thought the young detective as he leaped forward with the activity of an elk, and was actually running down Boggs very fast when a tall, handsome elderly man, well dressed and dignified, darted from the sidewalk, and planted himself in the middle of the road.

Full into the gentleman's arms ran the detective, and then started back in pleased astonishment.

"Mr. Ward!"

"Dan Manly!"

The two shook hands warmly, and the detective quietly gave up all hope of catching Montgomery Boggs for that time.

CHAPTER V.

MAKING A BARGAIN.

"COME with me, Dan, and tell me all about it," the gentleman was saying ten minutes later, as the detective took a seat by his side in a Brooklyn Bridge railway car.

"There is but little to tell, Mr. Ward, I am sorry to say. Your daughter has not been recovered. I have been working on the case constantly since you left for Europe three months ago, but I am to day further from restoring her to your arms than I ever was."

The gentleman covered his eyes with his hand and sighed bitterly.

"My poor Marion—my poor child!"

"I have had two letters from the parties, whoever they are. They were addressed to you, but of course I obeyed your instructions and opened all your mail. The other letters that do not concern me, you have no doubt found in your private drawer in your bookcase, since you came home."

"No, Dan."

"Indeed? Why not? I left them there, and there are no keys to the drawer save the two we have. And it is a Yale lock, too."

"I have not been home yet. I only got off the steamer from Liverpool this morning, and I have been wandering about aimlessly ever since. I did not expect to see you until nine o'clock to-morrow morning. You always call at my house at that time, I suppose, according to agreement?"

"Yes, every morning."

"I knew you would. I can trust you, Dan."

Vandecker Ward, the banker, shook hands with the young detective, and would have willingly given up every dollar of his fortune in exchange for Double-Curve Dan's peace of mind.

As the two rode across the bridge, and thence by the Third Avenue Elevated Road to the Fourteenth street station, the detective told the banker that in the two letters received from unknown persons they had offered to restore the only daughter of Vandecker Ward to him in consideration of a ransom of \$50,000 to be paid over in the way they should prescribe, and that an answer to their communications could be conveyed to them by certain signs in this manner: If the proposition was accepted he was to make a chalk mark upon one of the railings and the statue of Washington in Union Square on the 14th street side, thus: H. If rejected, the mark was to be, O. If time was required for consideration the fact was to be announced by a mark like this, X.

Dan had, in answer to the two letters, chalked an X on the railings as directed, waiting for Mr. Ward's return from abroad.

Vandecker Ward listened attentively to the words of the detective. He was thinking deeply. At last he spoke:

"Since my daughter was stolen from my home that evening, over twelve months ago, have you never suspected any one in particular?"

"Yes, I have suspected many, but every trail I have followed has led nowhere, and I have always found myself at fault until now."

"Until now!" repeated the banker, catching eagerly at the expression that seemed to convey some slight hope.

"Yes, until now, for I believe that to-day I have struck the right scent."

"You have?"

The banker almost shrieked, causing the other passengers in the car to look at him in wonder,

as he tried to make it appear that he was only coughing or sneezing. They did not trouble themselves about him particularly. A New York crowd in a public conveyance is generally occupied with its own affairs, and soon attention was withdrawn from him as completely as if he was not in existence.

The detective went on: "I believe I know who the people are that have had something to do with the abduction, but they are so sharp that I have not the least idea where to find Miss Ward."

"But you will surely be able to trace her now that you have, as you say, a clew to the identity of the people in the conspiracy."

"I will try," answered Double-Curve Dan, quietly as he arose and signed to Mr. Ward that they had reached their destination.

They went down the stairs from the Elevated Railroad Station and walked along Fourteenth street toward Broadway.

As they reached Union Square Dan called Mr. Ward's attention to a certain portion of the railing around the Washington statue upon which a half-obliterated cross was chalked.

"That is my mark," he observed, quietly. "Don't you think it had better be changed for that signifying consent?"

"Yes, yes. Certainly. If I had only been home before, so that I could have paid the money and got back my darling Marion ere this!" ejaculated Mr. Ward, wildly.

"Hush!" admonished the detective. "You don't know who is listening!"

He spoke with reason, for a little old man with long white hair, and a slouched hat pulled well down over a yellow shriveled face, slunk away from the neighborhood of the monument and disappeared in the darkness as he saw that Dan had noticed him.

The banker did not reply, but stepping up to the iron fence, with his gloved-hand rubbed out the cross and substituted the mark of acquiescence, thus, H.

The detective nodded approvingly.

"That is wise. I saw a gentleman just now whom I strongly suspect of knowing something about your daughter. He may not be the actual abductor, but I think he could assist us in laying our hands upon the man that is, did he care to do so."

"Who is he?" asked Vandecker Ward, eagerly.

"His name is Sol Nugent. But that will not help you in any way. You cannot use your knowledge of his name. If it were wise to arrest him, I could have taken him at any time."

"But—"

"Mr. Ward, have you confidence in me?" asked the detective, quietly, as he looked his companion steadily in the eye.

"You know I have."

"Then do as I tell you. I mean," he added, as if to ask pardon for his abruptness, "do not act hastily without my advice."

The banker put out his hand and clasped that of the detective with an earnest, silent pressure that told plainer than mere words that he understood the necessity of implicit obedience.

With a parting glance at the H on the fence that signified the willingness of the millionaire Vandecker Ward to pay \$50,000 for the return of his daughter, safe and unharmed, the two men walked across to the park of Union Square, and up Broadway to West Twentieth street.

West Twentieth street, New York, between Fifth and sixth avenues, is a quiet thoroughfare of large brown-stone houses that are still fashionable to a certain extent. In the tendency of fashion to get further and further up-town the street is not so exactly in the heart of swelldom as it was twenty years ago, but it possesses an air of repose and a distinguished dullness that are inseparable from the houses of wealthy and exclusive people.

Some of the houses on West Twentieth street in this particular part are boarding-houses—but they are boarding-houses at which good round rates are charged, and at which the guests are people who can afford to pay them. For the rest there are doctors and other professional men living in some of the sober-looking mansions, with a few wealthy merchants and down-town business men occupying the remainder.

The street was very quiet as Vandecker Ward and Dan Manly walked down from Broadway on this evening. It was about ten o'clock now, and except at two of the aforesaid business men's mansions where the lights behind the curtains and the soft strains of music making their way through the open windows told that the gay season had already set in with them in the form of receptions, there was nothing to disturb the placid, almost funereal, silence that prevailed.

Walking up the massive stone steps of No. 47 1/2 with an air of proprietorship, Mr. Ward opened the door with a latch-key and admitted himself and the detective.

In a room on the right of the hall a gas-jet was burning and showed a handsome bookcase, a desk and a full set of richly upholstered furniture. On every hand were evidences of luxury and taste, from the soft Turkey carpet to the frescoed Greek gods and goddesses on the ceiling. The shutters were tightly closed, and the room had that indescribable air of emptiness that comes from being long unoccupied.

The banker touched an electric bell button at the side of his desk, and a soft whistle sounded in the room near him.

The detective evidently knew the ways of the house, for he sat quietly opposite the banker for perhaps fifteen minutes, each occupied with their own thoughts. Then there was a gentle rattle on the floor near the bell, and almost noiselessly a portion of the flooring, carpet and all, about four feet square, sunk out of sight, and a table set with a dainty meal upon its snowy cloth, rose upon a false floor and silently claimed attention.

"Come, Dan. You must be faint and hungry, as well as I. Let us take some supper. We shall be all the better able to decide upon our future actions if we can get a good meal."

Nothing loth, the detective fell to, and one would have supposed that the young man had nothing upon his mind, judging from the way he demolished chicken salad, lobster, bread and butter, and coffee, of which a large pot, hung over a small, but powerful spirit-lamp stove, was numbered among the other delicacies and conveniences on the table.

Lest it might be supposed that there was any element of magic or fairy power in this manner of supplying meals in Banker Ward's household—the reader is informed that it was the humor of the master of the household not to be troubled with the presence of his servants when it could be avoided. Hence he had caused various contrivances to be made under his personal direction to supply him with whatever he wanted without bringing him into personal contact with his domestic attendants. The machinery that brought his table to him was governed by hydraulics, and most of the other appliances were moved by the same power.

The detective knew Mr. Ward's ways, and he did not experience any surprise at what he saw. In fact, he had, while the banker had been away, availed himself of some of the bells, whistles, and other machinery, when he desired their use, in accordance with the directions of his employer before he left for Europe.

Ting!

A bell rung loudly at the banker's ear.

Mr. Ward started, and seized an India-rubber tube with a mouthpiece that hung at the side of his desk, but the detective took it from him with a warning gesture, and applied his mouth to the ivory cup.

"Who is it?" he asked, quietly.

"I want to see the base-ball pitcher!" was the enigmatical response.

"What number?"

"Third base."

"Come in."

He pressed a button in the wall behind the parlor door, which stood open, and the next instant a slight draught told that the street door had swung open, as almost instantaneously Sol Nugent shuffled into the room, and stood wiping his yellow forehead with a dirty white silk-handkerchief.

He glanced inquiringly at the banker, who sat at the table idly crumpling a piece of bread, while Double-Curve Dan stood behind the door, in the shadow looking with a smile at the old man.

"Well, sir, you give me der word. Have yer got anydings der say to me?" croaked Sol.

"Speak to him," answered Mr. Ward nodding toward the detective. "You said you wanted to see the base-ball pitcher."

Sol Nugent turned quickly, saw Dan and was seized with a fit of trembling that would have indicated illness were it not apparent that surprise and fear were the reasons of it.

"Good-evening, Sol!" said the detective pleasantly as he stepped forward. "Is everything safe at the base-ball grounds? Did we not lay out the Toughs pretty well this afternoon?"

The old man could only look at the young man and gasp.

"Anything I can do for you, Sol?" continued the detective.

"V'at is dis house? Vas it you v'ot live here?" faltered Sol.

"No. This is the residence of Mr. Van-

decker Ward, the Banker, and I am his private secretary."

"Are you der feller v'ot ve hafe been writing to dis three weeks past?"

"We? Who do you mean by we?" asked the detective, quickly.

The old man saw that he had made a mistake, and he tried to rectify it by saying: "Vell, I mean der mans v'at sent me here. I don't know nodings about v'at he wrote to you."

"Well, what have you to say? What is your message?"

"Here it vas. Read it and gife me back der paper."

The old man took from his pocket a sheet of letter-paper, upon which was scrawled:

"In the beer-garden, alone, ten o'clock to-morrow night. Alone, or no business."

He held the paper tightly in his two hands, as he leaned toward the banker, so that he could read it, the detective reading it over his shoulder.

"Now. Have you read that, so that you will remember it, Mr. Ward?"

"Yes."

"Quite sure, Mr. Ward?"

He said "Mr. Ward" each time to make the detective understand most explicitly that he must not be present. All of which Double-Curve Dan thoroughly understood.

"I have read it and shall not forget it," answered the banker, as he repeated: "In the beer-garden, alone, ten o'clock to-morrow night. Alone, or no business."

"Good."

The old man coolly put the paper in the gas-jet and held it until it was entirely consumed, rubbing the ashes of the paper into dust, and throwing it into the grate. Then he drew another smaller piece of paper from his pocket and held it, folded in his hand, reflectively.

"You say beer-garden, but not where the beer garden is," remarked the banker.

"I beg your pardon. It vas you v'ot say so. I not say nodings. I only gife you der papers," corrected the old man.

"Sharp as an old fox!" was the detective's inaudible comment.

Sol slowly unfolded the paper and showed it to the banker, Double-Curve Dan reading over his shoulder as before.

The words on this paper were: "High Bridge, New York side."

"Read it?" asked Nugent.

"Yes."

"That's all, den."

And the second paper was burned like the first.

"V'at shall I tell der mans v'at sent me?"

The detective made the slightest possible sign to Mr. Ward, but it was understood, as the banker replied, with a desperate effort to be calm:

"Tell them, yes."

In another two minutes the banker was alone, and Sol Nugent, as he stepped upon a Broadway car going down-town, congratulated himself on not being followed by any one, he having kept his eye on the front doorway long enough to see that no one came out of it in pursuit of him.

But, where was Double-Curve Dan? Did he find his way out of the home of the banker in time to shadow Sol Nugent, as he stole up the street past the great store-houses? We shall see.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE WOLF AGAIN.

WHEN Montgomery Boggs stood in the cellar with his lantern in his arms, facing Marion Ward, he grinned a wide and portentous grin.

"Found—this—hanging—outside—and—took—it. Ha—ha—ha!"

He waved the lantern as he spoke to show that he referred to it, and odd gleams of light shone in all directions, making the shadows dance, as he did so.

"Boggs, Boggs, are you going to take me out of this awful place?"

Marion, who had been brave while alone and depending entirely upon herself, now gave way a little, and allowed a few tears to drop upon her cheek. There was a wild ring in her tones as she appealed to Boggs.

The boy's mouth distended, and Marion expected that he would grin again. But he didn't. He only emitted two distinct howls of sympathy and then shut his mouth with a snap, as if to prevent his feelings getting the better of him again.

Then, he threw out his arms, alternately, as if

to try their strength and activity, and running past Marion up the stone steps listened intently at the trap-door.

"No—one—there—I—guess."

"Oh, I hope not. That terrible old woman frightens me when I think of her even," whispered Marion.

"She—is—all—right. I'll—break—her—head—if—she—comes—down!"

Boggs spoke in a very matter-of-fact way, but there is no doubt that he meant what he said, for he drew from his pocket a short, heavy hammer such as is used by blacksmiths, and shook it threateningly at the trap-door above his head.

"Now—come!" he whispered, as he seized the girl by the wrist and drew her toward the door in the corner.

Marion obeyed mechanically, and the next moment found herself in a long passage, of stone or brick, that led in the darkness she knew not where, and along which a chill damp wind came creeping toward her, telling that the river was not far off.

Boggs closed the door through which they had just emerged, and locked it carefully. He was determined that Mother Collins should not follow them without some little trouble.

Then he held up the lantern and showed his companion that a door in the end of the passage over their heads communicated with the warehouse above the cellar in which Marion had been confined. A ladder, such as is used for sliding barrels into cellars, leaned against the door, and indicated at once to what use this passage was put.

"Send—their—liquor—down—here—to—the—river—dock," explained Boggs, in an off-hand way, as he led the girl along into the darkness.

"Boggs, what would have become of me without you? You are my preserver, indeed."

The boy opened his mouth, but closed it again without either laughing or howling.

"Boggs, how did you find me?"

"Easily enough," was the answer.

Being pressed for particulars, Boggs told how he had followed the carriage containing Red Gabe and Marion until it had crossed the bridge, how he had lost it on the New York side in the rush of vehicles, how he had found it again, then lost it, and at last caught sight of it as it drove away. How he had lurked about the neighborhood until he saw Sol Nugent sneaking up the street upon which the liquor store faced. How he had followed the old man at a safe distance until he reached the last river dock and had made his way into the passage they were now traversing.

"Then—you—know—Miss—Marion—he—opened—a—little—door—here—and—took—out—this—lantern—and—key. Then—he—changed—his—mind—I—guess—for—he—put—them—back—and—when—he—had—gone—I—took—them."

Boggs here stopped and indulged in a silent grin, while Marion took up the narrative and finished it:

"And then you, knowing that terrible old man was a friend of Red Gabe's, suspected that this place was connected with that to which they had brought me. So you took the lantern and key, and found me, eh?"

Boggs grinned so broadly at this that the rays of his lantern, which he held before his face, went an awfully long way down his throat, and made his teeth glisten like a cemetery in a thunder-storm.

He seemed to be stricken with remorse for exhibiting levity on such a serious occasion, however, for he pulled his face straight with a sudden effort, and without saying another word, dragged Marion along the passage nearer and nearer to the point from which the damp wind was rushing with ever-increasing force.

The damp river air was tainted with the odor of stale wines and old barrels, and it was easy to believe that the passage had seen many thousand gallons of liquor traveling between the warehouse and the river docks. Boggs sniffed with an air of enjoyment, as if he considered the flavor rather pleasant than otherwise, but there was an expression of deep disgust upon Marion's face that would probably have struck even Boggs, had there been light enough to see it.

The passage wound by a tortuous path through a long distance, but always nearer the river.

Boggs walked a few paces in advance, having relinquished his hold of Marion's wrist, when he found that she could follow him without trouble. He held up the lantern and brought the damp walls in strong relief as he moved along.

Suddenly he stopped, and putting up his finger warningly, opened the lantern and blew out the light.

"What is the matter?" whispered Marion.

"Hist!"

"What is it?"

"Hush!"

"Are we discovered?"

"Do—not—speak—a—word."

Although there could be no doubt that Montgomery Boggs was laboring under strong excitement, he did not quicken his speech. His drawl was not quite as firm as usual perhaps, but it was as slow as usual.

"Stay—here," he whispered, after a pause, during which his heavy breathing indicated that he was listening intently.

He gently drew Marion into a little niche that had evidently been made to enable people to get out of the way when a particularly large barrel was being rolled along the passage, and with another warning "Hush!" crept away.

The girl trembled in spite of herself, when she realized that she was alone.

"What can he have heard?" she asked herself. "If Red Gabe should find me now he would kill me, I know, and Mother Collins! oh, no! I cannot—cannot fall into her hands again!"

She actually covered her face with her hands in the darkness and shuddered at the mere thought of the possibility of the old woman getting her into her clutches once more.

She waited, five—ten—minutes, but still Boggs did not return.

"I must go on," she muttered. "I cannot stay here, in this terrible place, alone."

She walked cautiously forward, till, suddenly, turning a corner, she came into full view of the river, rolling, dark and sullen, toward the sea, with its white caps showing occasionally as the moon peeped from behind the driving clouds and disappeared again.

The passage ended in a tumble-down old dock, that rocked to and fro upon its crazy piles, but that was still used by the liquor firm when it did business by way of the river. This was not often, however. With the march of improvement, it was easier to receive and dispose of its liquors by means of the great wagons that were ever rolling up and down the narrow streets, and the squat Dutch vessels that used to be so common at the dock had but little business there now. Still the dock was used sometimes, as was evidenced by the barrels and cases that stood untidily upon the rotting planks and seemed as if seeking a reasonable excuse to drop through into the river and be carried out into the bay.

Warily the girl stepped toward the opening, keeping well in the shadow, and with her eyes straining in search of Boggs.

Not a sign of him was to be seen. The planks rocking on the piles creaked dismally, and the swish of the water against the green slimy posts made a mournful accompaniment to the sighing of the wind as it tore down the river and played through the wires of the Suspension Bridge as if it were a gigantic Aeolian harp.

But no Boggs!

Where could he have gone?

Marion ventured to the edge of the dock, from the passage and tried to look up and down. The darkness prevented her seeing anything distinctly, but she could assure herself that Boggs was not in the immediate neighborhood. He must have walked along some distance to the next street and thence made his way toward the front of the liquor store.

But why had he left Marion in this manner? Could he be false to her? The girl dismissed this thought as soon as it entered her mind. It was unworthy of her and an injustice to her faithful friend, she was sure.

"Boggs!"

She called softly and listened.

What was that? Did she see some one running behind that barrel near the extreme edge of the dark? Could it be Boggs?

"Boggs!"

No answer.

"Boggs!"

She was sure she saw something move now, and it was the form of a man coming around the barrel but partly hiding itself behind the large box or case that stood by its side.

"Boggs!"

She had only caught a hasty glimpse of the man, but she knew that it was Boggs. No doubt he suspected danger and was searching the dock carefully before bringing her out of the passage.

Her conscience smote her as she saw how cautious her friend was on her account, and thought how her rashness might render all his carefulness fruitless.

"Boggs!"

Ah! Now he heard her.

"Boggs!"

Even as she uttered his name again she saw that she was mistaken.

The man darted upon her from behind the large case, and quickly throwing a large handkerchief around her mouth and tying it tightly, so that she was almost suffocated, he held her by the two arms in a grip of iron, and thrusting his face close to hers, showed her the hated features of Red Gabe!

"Oho! my beauty! Thought you had got away, didn't yer? Not yet. Yer mought hev done it ef I hadn't been quite so slick. Ez it is, I hev yer right hyar, an' I'm goin' to make yer safe now, you kin bet. Thet durned old skunk uv a Sol Nugent ought ter hev watched yer, ez he was told to do, an' yer wouldn't hev got ez fur ez yer hev. I wonder whar he's taken his old carcass to anyhow."

"Never mind 'bout wondering. Just hand the girl down here, an' let's git away with her. This ain't no place to stay with her. This hyar crib's bu'sted now, so far as safety is concerned."

A cold, strident voice spoke thus from beneath the very feet of the girl, causing her to start back with an irrepressible shriek, followed by the gasping exclamation:

"Mother Collins!"

"That's who it is, my deary, an' you'll know it when I git yer down hyar."

"What! yer hev that han'kercher off yer mouth, hev yer?" interrupted Red Gabe. "That won't do. I don't want yer talk at all now. Yer kin do that by and by, when I gets yer all comfortably settle'd."

He replaced the handkerchief—which had slipped down slightly—over the girl's mouth, and then dragged her with no gentle hand along the dock.

He knew all the ins and outs of the place, evidently, for he went straight, in the darkness, to a certain spot, where he found a stout iron ring, by means of which he opened a large trap-door in the crazy flooring.

The dock was only a few feet above the water. It was so much lower than the usual wharfage along the river front that the water often washed over it, especially in rough weather, and the boards were almost as slimy as the piles that supported them.

Red Gabe did not care for the slime, however. It suited him that the river was not far below the flooring, because he could easily reach down.

"Haloo, thar!" he growled down the opening, as he pulled up the trap-door.

"Haloo, yerself, and see how yer like it," responded the amiable tones of Mother Collins, whom Marion now saw was standing up in a skiff that was bobbing about among the piles under the dock.

"Quit yer smartness an' help me down with this hyar durned gal, d'y'e hear," growled Red Gabe. "Git down hyar," he added to Marion, giving her a vicious pull toward the opening.

The girl looked wildly around her.

"Where can Boggs be?" was the inaudible cry that arose from her heart. "Where can he be?"

"Shove her down," whispered Mother Collins.

"Git ready, then. Hyar she is," responded Gabe.

Before Marion knew exactly what was going on, she was lifted from her feet and dropped down the hole into the arms of Mother Collins, who had sat down in the bottom of the boat, to prevent its being capsized.

Red Gabe's overcoat, that had been lying in the boat, and with which it will be remembered Marion had already had unpleasant acquaintance, was hastily thrown around her, partly to hide her from the gaze of any curious strangers that might be prowling about, and to whom it was not expedient to show that a young girl was sitting in a boat toward midnight.

"To keep, you warm, deary," croaked Mother Collins, adding through her closed teeth: "You baggage!"

In another minute, Gabriel Kerr had dropped into the boat, and seizing the oars that had lain loosely in the rowlocks, moving up and down idly with the restless water, pulled swiftly into the stream and rowed with a steady sailor-like stroke up the river.

"You kin loosen that han'kercher on her mouth ef yer like," suggested Red Gabe. "We don't want ter choke her—jist yit."

The old woman took the hint and removed the handkerchief from the girl's mouth.

"Where is Boggs?" asked Marion, as soon as she could speak.

"Thar!"

It was Red Gabe that spoke, and he accompa-

nied the word with a nod of the head toward the stern of the boat where what the girl had supposed to be a mere bundle of clothes moved slightly, exposing the rueful countenance of Montgomery Boggs!

CHAPTER VII.

A BATTLE ON THE RIVER.

SWIFTLY moved the oars in the sinewy hands of Red Gabe as he made the boat leap along up stream. He evidently knew just where he was going, and there was no hesitation in his course as he wound in and out among the shipping anchored out in the river or moored to the docks.

The night had become still cloudier, and the moon, that had shown itself occasionally when Marion had emerged from the passage, was now hidden entirely behind the black pall that hung in the heavens.

"We must get thar az soon az we kin," growled Red Gabe, as he reached a clean stretch of water after rowing for about half-an-hour without speaking. "We ain't goin' ter take no chances, you kin bet."

"Of course we ain't. We know that, without you a-tellin' us," responded Mother Collins, in sulky tones. "But it seems ter me that you've made us take more chances now than we need have if you hed tended ter bizness better."

The bundle of clothes that Marion had recognized as Montgomery Boggs moved uneasily as if it were cramped. The old woman pounced upon it and gave it a hearty kick that drew an irrepressible groan from the unlucky Boggs and made Marion start from her seat with indignation.

"You keep still, yer baggage! Don't let us have any uv your tricks or I'll throw yer overboard," growled Gabe. "Hello! What's that?" he added, in a different tone, as he stopped rowing and looked earnestly at the black mass on his right that he knew was the shore line and shipping of New York.

"What?" asked Mother Collins following the direction of his glance.

"The signal?"

"Whar?"

"Right side uv thet schooner straight ter starb'd."

"I see four or five schooners."

"Don't be a fool. It's allers the way with women. They want ter be smart jist when they shouldn't be. Thar's er schooner over thar furder out in thar stream than thar rest uv 'em. She's 'er French craft, I kin tell by the cut uv her."

"Wal?"

"Wal, jist watch her a minute."

Mother Collins who at first had evidently attached little weight to Red Gabe's remarks, now looked intently at the craft which, as Gabe had said, was further out in the river than others in its neighborhood, and which, notwithstanding the darkness, his practiced eye had detected as a French vessel at a glance.

"Yes, I see it," she muttered, at last. "A light moving up and down. The signal of the Toughs. Who is it?"

"Who should it be?"

"Not Sol—"

"Not Sol!" repeated Gabe, mimicking. "Of course it's Sol. Who else could be thar, watching us? He must have seen us leave the crib below, and he's follered us up hyar whar he knew he could signal us."

The light to which Mother Collins had referred was now moving up and down rapidly, like a star that had lost the way, and was half-disposed to jump into the river.

Red Gabe, with one eye on the light, turned the boat around with one or two vigorous strokes, and pulled hard toward the French schooner, looking over his shoulder at intervals, to make sure that his direction was right.

In a few minutes the skiff ran under the stern of the schooner, and stopped at the side of a large, awkward flat coal-barge.

The light had disappeared as the skiff drew near the barge, but Red Gabe rowed on without hesitation. He knew that the light would show itself again in a moment if he desired it.

Marion sat quite still in the skiff, wrapped in Red Gabe's overcoat, and wondering what new trouble would be brought upon her by the meeting with Sol Nugent. She knew instinctively that any fresh movement upon the part of her captors could only be for her disadvantage.

As for Boggs, he was bound so tightly (although the ropes that held him were hidden beneath the rags thrown over him), that he could not move hand or foot, and could only look around him wonderingly, as he tried to arrange some scheme in his mind by which he could secure the release of Marion, as well as of himself.

"Put yer hand ter ther barge," whispered Gabe, huskily.

Mother Collins obeyed, thus holding the skiff steady, while Gabe, putting two of his fingers in his mouth, emitted a low, hoarse whistle, like that of a steamer in the distance.

An answering whistle, so like his own that it might have been an echo, came from the barge overhead, and the next moment a head and a hat leaned over the side, showing indistinctly in the darkness against the gray clouds, but quite plainly enough for Red Gabe to recognize them.

"Sol!"

"Yes, mein tear."

"What are yer up ter?"

"Goot news, mein tear—goot news!"

"Ha!"

"Yes, mein tear, der old man's—old Ward—"

"Shut up, can't yer!" interrupted Red Gabe, fiercely. "Ain't yer got no sense?"

"Why—I—"

"Shut up, I tell yer! Who's on that boat, sides yerself?"

"No one, mein tear. No one. There ain't never no one on dese boats at night. You know dot."

Gabe did not condescend to reply, but with a whispered injunction to Mother Collins to keep her eye on the prisoners, to which she responded by showing an ugly-looking dirk-knife under her shawl, he swung himself out of the skiff, and stood by Sol Nugent's side on the barge.

"Hist! What's that?" whispered Gabe, as he dragged Sol down to a stooping position.

"What?" asked the old man.

"Nothing, I guess. Thought I heard a footstep on the coal back thar but I don't think it waz anything pertickler. Some of the small coal shifted a little with ther rocking uv ther barge or ther tide."

"Yes, mein tear. Dot vas all."

"Now, tell me what you've done. I s'pose yer hev something ter tell me, or yer wouldn't be prowling 'bout hyar at midnight."

"Yes, mein tear, indeed I have. Listen."

Then Sol Nugent related all that had passed in Mr. Ward's library on West Twentieth street, together with the conversation of the banker and the detective at the Washington statue in Union Square.

"Just what I thought, though I never knew it fer sure afore—that durned Double-Curve Dan is ther feller ez hez been chasin' around fer ther last three months. An', by Caesar, even when she got away from us, he didn't seem able to catch her."

"No, mein tear, nary a catch! Now he kin have her if he pays our price, eb," said Sol Nugent, rubbing his hands together gleefully.

"Fifty thousand dollars," muttered Gabe. "Yes, ef we kin land that, thar'll be no need fer any more scheming. It's er mighty big prize, but I don't see why it shouldn't be done. Great snakes! it shall be done!"

"Well, hevn't yer got through with yer confab up thar yet?" broke in Mother Collins, impatiently.

"Yes, mein tear, yes," answered Sol. "I'll go with yer, Gabe, if you kin make room for me in the boat. I kin give yer all day to-morrow. There's nodings goin' on at the ball-grounds, an' I won't be wanted up there."

Gabe responded by giving the old man a shove that sent him into the boat all of a heap, and nearly upset the wobbling craft. Then he sprung in himself, and seizing the oars, pulled out into the stream, and headed for Harlem with all the vigor af a strong pair of arms.

It was very dark now, and a drizzling rain began to fall, rendering the atmosphere still thicker. Had it not been so very dark the occupants of the skiff might have had some inkling of the fact that there was another lighter boat, in which sat a young man, following them so closely that they could have tossed a pebble into it at any time, had they been able to see it.

The skiff had been put on the other side of the barge during the conversation between Red Gabe and Sol Nugent, but the young man now sitting in it had been crouched down upon the coal in the body of the barge, in such a position that he could hear every word passing between them.

Perhaps it was his footstep that Red Gabe thought he heard. Who knows?

When Gabe and his companions had rowed out into the stream, this young man had stepped into his light shell, and seizing the muffled oars, had made excellent time in pursuit of the skiff.

Now row, Red Gabe! Row with all your might! But you will never escape the silent pursuit of your Nemesis! The light shell will keep upon your track through all the windings

that is to take you to your destination, wherever it may be!

Up the river went the two boats. Past Blackwell's Island, around Leland's, skirting Ward's Island, with its Lunatic Asylum, crossing the mouth of the strait known as Little Hell Gate, along by Randall's Island, and thence into the Harlem River.

The rain was now coming down in torrents, and Red Gabe and Sol Nugent were soaked to the skin.

Still they kept on. The young man in the boat had an oilskin waterproof coat, and he cared nothing for the rain. He could not see the boat upon which he was keeping so closely, but the steady thump, thump of the oars guided him. Gabe had not troubled to muffle his rowlocks, and it was easy to follow him. The young man in the light shell, on the other hand, rowed quite noiselessly, save for theplash of the blades of the oars in the water, and that was covered up by the noise of the rain and the waves.

No one had spoken a word since leaving the barge by the side of the French schooner.

Suddenly, Gabe stopped rowing and backed water so violently that the light shell with its single occupant shot alongside before it could be stopped.

"Who are you?" shouted Gabe, as he drew a pistol from his pocket, and tried to pierce the thick rain and distinguish who was in the light boat.

"Yer murtherin' villain! Oi'll let yez know who Oi am av I kin git a howld on yez! Kim outer that boat!" broke in another voice.

"Halloa! Who the deuce is that?" muttered the young man to himself. "Tim Martin, as sure as my name is— Well, never mind!"

The shell had drifted away from the skiff as all stopped rowing, and the young man could not understand where Tim Martin was, although his voice was ringing out in a good, hearty, indignant fashion that told plainly enough his opinion of Red Gabe.

There was a crash in the darkness, followed by a smothered cry from Marion.

"Git out uv this boat, will yer?" roared Red Gabe.

"Faith an' Oi'll not git out!"

"Then take that!"

The noise of blows, mingled with the oaths of Gabe, and the harsh croaking of Mother Collins, was too much for the young man in the shell.

He pulled desperately forward, and the sharp bow of his shell ran between the skiff and another row-boat, held by a line that Tim Martin had thrown to Marion, and who clung to it with the tenacity of desperation, thus keeping the two boats together.

To spring into the skiff and seize Gabe by the throat was the work of a second. The young man was active and wiry, and he soon had the tough lying on his back on the boat.

"Curse yer!" hissed Gabe. "I know yer now."

"Do you? Well, what of it?"

"Whv, I'll tell you to-morrow. Let go of my throat!"

With a mighty effort he released himself from the other's grasp. There was a tremendous rocking of the boat, a blow on the back of the head from Mother Collins's clinched fist that stunned him, a splash and then a wild fighting with the waves of the Harlem River, and a mocking voice buzzing in his ears, as the boats disappeared in the darkness.

"I guess that thar is ther last uv 'Double-Curve Dan!'"

CHAPTER VIII.

A COMEDY OF ERRORS.

THE detective—for of course the young man was none other—struck out mechanically as soon as he found himself in the water.

The rain was still descending in torrents, and he could not see any thing but a faint glimmering light in the distance, which might be a mile away, or within a few yards of him. He could not distinguish which in the awful gloom.

"This is a nice situation for a fellow who has a prejudice against getting his feet wet, I must say," thought Dan. "I shall have a nice comfortable swim this morning, with all my heavy clothing on, but I am afraid I sha'n't be able to hold out very long. Rather an unpleasant way to end one's life too."

Double-Curve Dan was not the sort of man to give up while there was a chance to do anything. After his momentary reflection upon the situation in which he found himself, he set himself seriously to the task of getting out of it. The light that still blinked feebly through the rain, was his beacon, and he felt that he must

reach that if he meant to follow up his task of restoring Marion Ward to her father.

During the short struggle in the boat, Sol Nugent had sat by the side of Montgomery Boggs, with a pistol in his hand to make sure that the boy did not make an outcry, or attempt to take part in the fray. Although he was securely tied, as Sol believed, it might be possible for the boy to break his bonds—and Sol never took chances, if he could help it. Moreover, the old man preferred to let Red Gabe do the active fighting.

The detective had seen all this. He knew that the daughter of Vandeker Ward was in the skiff, and he half suspected, putting this and that together, that the bundle lying in the stern was Boggs, although he could not see his face, and had nothing but conjecture to go upon.

"If I can only get to the shore, I think I can make it very interesting for the whole gang and restore the young lady to her father without paying \$50,000, or even \$500."

While communing thus with himself the detective was swimming mechanically in the direction of the light. His clothes, heavy with water, impeded his movements to some extent, but he was a strong swimmer, and he forged ahead in spite of all disadvantages.

"And I have a waterproof overcoat on, too," he muttered, actually laughing aloud at the absurdity of the thing.

His reflections were rudely disturbed by a floating mass of something, that, in the gloom, and seen from the surface of the water, looked like a mountain, and that crashed against one of his shoulders with such force as to turn him completely over and push him beneath the water, as it glided over him.

As he came up he felt a wet rope crawling over his face.

"A boat!" he spluttered as he seized the rope and hauled it toward him, hand over hand, until he reached the great mass and found that it was a skiff, bottom upward.

He dragged himself upon it, and then, as he wiped the water out of his eyes, and tried to look around him, he was astonished to feel a pair of hands upon his throat while a voice hissed in his ear.

"Yez air a murtherin' villain, an' Oi've got yez right here. Faix, Oi'll kill yez, ef I hev ter be hanged for it. That is, ef I ain't drowned to-night."

The detective threw off his assailant easily enough as he said: "Just keep quiet for a moment, and let us see about getting to shore. Then you can kill me if you desire to do so."

"Faix, Oi'll not wait," returned Tim Martin, for he it was, of course. "Oi've been doomed in the river an' Oi've been battered an' banged be all the rogues in New York seems to me, an' Oi'll tek me revings out uv you now, d'ye moind."

The worthy Tim proved that he was in earnest, by springing at the detective again, which resulted in the assailant being thrown back on the keel of the boat, which, fortunately was flat, or the two would undoubtedly have rolled into the river.

"Keep still you idiot! Keep still till we get ashore. Then you can fight as much as you like," said the detective sternly.

"Well, let me up an' Oi'll do what ye say. But troth Oi'll lick yez as soon as we are ashore."

"All right," responded Double-Curve Dan, cheerfully, as he released the Irishman and tried to see where the boat was drifting.

He knew in a very few seconds, for it suddenly crashed against some piles, and the next moment turned over and threw both men into the water, among a drift of wood-splinters, corks and the scum that always collects along the shores of a river near a city.

A long, slimy platform of broken boards reached from the sloping bank into the water, indicating that it was used for a skiff landing, and upon this delightful support that rocked and plunged as the muddy waves played under it, the detective and Tim found themselves floundering.

With a tremendous sputter both men made their way to the solid ground, and walked up in the mud till they found themselves out of the reach of the water.

"Now, yez shpalpeen, Oi'm goin' to larrup yez."

It was Tim Martin who spoke, and he was dancing around the detective with his arms waving like demented windmills, and taking no more notice of his surroundings than if he had been in a warm, comfortable room, instead of in a driving rain, on the river-bank, in an unknown locality, at two o'clock in the morning.

"Before you larrup me will you not listen to what I have to say?" asked Dan, smiling, in spite of his anxiety, over the ludicrous situation in which he found himself.

"Well, say what yez hev ter say, an' say it thoonderin' quick."

"You are trying to rescue Marion Ward from the men who are keeping her from her father, are you not?"

"Yes, Oi am, an' you are one of the men."

The detective opened his eyes, as he understood now for the first time why Tim Martin had shown so much enmity to him.

"You think I am one of Marion Ward's abductors?"

"Oi do. I know yez are wan uv her abductors, an' faith, Oi'll not spind any more toime foolin' wid yez. So look out."

Again Tim made a rush at Dan, and again he was repulsed with ease. Double-Curve Dan was too expert in the management of his fists to be overcome by one who had nothing but pluck to sustain him in a fisticuff battle.

"There is no use in your taking this plan with me," said the detective, as he held the infuriated Tim at arm's-length, and speaking seriously for the first time. "I am not one of Marion Ward's abductors, and my only purpose is to restore her to her father. I am a friend of Mr. Vandeker Ward, and he trusts to me to bring his daughter to him again. I was chasing the boat in which they were taking her to one of their haunts up the river, and which I know, when we all fell foul of each other out in the stream yonder."

"How do Oi know that yez air not a thoun-derin' liar?" responded Tim, reflectively.

"Do I talk like a liar?"

"Faix, liars talk ivery way, an' it's joost whin they talk most loike the truth that ye must look out for them. It is, be me sowl!"

"Your philosophy is not bad, but it is misleading in this case. Now, see here. This is what I propose."

"What?"

"Listen. If we take this boat of yours, lying upon the bank, and row up the river, we can get to High Bridge in the course of an hour. Just this side of the bridge, down on the bank, is a house at which you can get the best clam-chowder you ever tasted, and where we can dry our clothes and get a few hours' sleep."

"Slape, is it? No, indade, Oi don't slape this night. Oi kin oct to foind my gírrul. I towld Katie—me woife, that is—that Oi'd foind her afore Oi'd slape, an' Oi'll do it. Begorra, not you nor no ither mon kin stop me."

"I do not want to stop you, but we cannot do anything just now. I know where the crib is that they are taking Marion Ward to, and we will go directly to it in the morning. But we cannot do anything till daylight."

"Oi dunno 'bout that. Oi think we could. Howsumever, Oi'll do what ye say," adding inwardly: "But Oi'll watch yez all the same, an' if Oi have reason to think as ye ain't straight, be the powers, Oi'll crack yer skull."

With some difficulty the boat—that in which Tim Martin had rowed out from shore when he thought he caught a glimpse of the skiff in which Red Gabe was bearing away Marion, and which he had followed from the shore at intervals all the way from the dock of the liquor-house—was righted and examined by the detective and his companion. There were no oars, but two pieces of wood that had washed ashore served as paddles, and by vigorously plying them, the two men made pretty good time up the river.

The rain, which had been less violent for the last half-hour, now stopped altogether, and the detective noticed a few stars here and there, showing that the clouds were breaking, and that there was reason to hope for a fine day after the terribly stormy night.

"Look out! Here we are," said Dan, as the boat reached a dock below the High Bridge, at which the small steamers that take excursionists from New York up and down the river always stop.

Tim, still suspicious of his companion, helped him to draw the boat ashore and then followed him along the plank walk to the frame house that nestled at the foot of the steep hill, up which a winding path, and many short flights of steps, led to the road above, level with the peculiar, narrow bridge across the river that accommodates the pipes supplying the vast city of New York with water for daily use.

A light shone in one of the windows facing the river, and a tap on the door brought a sleepy colored man, who took the detective's order for a cup of hot coffee and some clam chowder quite as a matter of course, notwithstanding the hour,

and pointed silently to the kitchen stove in a little slip of a room at the side in which the cooking was done.

The detective took the hint, and very soon his garments were off and being dried one by one at the stove, the steam arising in a cloud that obscured everything, including the colored cook, who was busy preparing the clam chowder and coffee.

In the course of half-an-hour, Tim and the detective, dry and warm, were enjoying their meal, but in silence, each busy with his own reflections.

Then, under the guidance of the colored man, they went into a small room in which two cot-beds looked inviting to the tired men, not the less so because the lapping of the waters of the river against the dock just outside the windows sounded a quiet lullaby that was in itself an almost irresistible invitation to slumber.

The detective set the example of confidence to Tim by throwing off his clothes and springing into bed at once, only taking the ordinary precaution of placing his revolver, note-book, money and watch under his pillow.

Tim followed the lead of Dan, and in his turn tumbled into the other bed. In ten minutes the regular breathing of the two occupants of the cot-beds told that they were sound asleep, and were not troubling themselves about the work before them—for the present at all events.

The sun had crept up toward its zenith, scouting the clouds that had hung about it at dawn, and insisting upon showing to the good people of New York and Harlem as fine a day as September ever knew. Still the detective and Tim slept on in their little room, with the thick blinds drawn down at the windows, shutting out all the sunlight that shone so brightly outside.

The detective had already trained himself to sleep anywhere and at any time. He found it necessary, because he never knew when there might be an extraordinary drain upon his vitality, and he liked to be always prepared.

Suddenly he became broad awake, and sitting up in his bed, with all his senses on the alert, listened to the conversation of two voices just outside his window. They were speaking in low tones, but every word was plainly distinguishable by the young detective.

"Ten o'clock to-night, you say?"

The voice was that of Red Gabe, and Double-Curve Dan recognized it at once, as well as he did that of Sol Nugent, which answered:

"Yes, ten o'clock to-night, in the peer garden on top of the hill here. Alone."

"Ah! We must take car' 'cause ther perlice ar' pretty sure ter be on ther watch."

"Nein, mein tear. No police. Mr. Ward wouldn't dare to do it. He knows that if he was to tell the police he would never see his daughter again. He, he, he!"

"What a very disagreeable laugh our friend Sol has, to be sure," was Dan's inward comment.

"But what 'bout this hyar feller Dan—Double-Curve Dan? Don't yer know he's er member uv ther New York Secret Service?"

"He's all right, mein tear. Trust me. He always works alone. I've found that out since yesterday. An' I guess he vas all right. He's yoost 'bout der Battery by this time. He'll never trouble us again. That knock overboard settled him."

"Thanks for the way in which you have arranged matters for me. But I am afraid I shall have to disappoint you," muttered Dan as he listened for more remarks.

"Well, then, Sol, I'll be ther at ten o'clock. I'll sit near the door, whar I kin see everybody come in, and you an' Mother Collins circulate among the crowd to make sure everything is straight."

"Yes, mein tear."

"Then, when ther old man comes I'll take him down ter the landing hyar, put him into ther boat an' row him over ter ther crib."

"Yes."

"Say, Sol, that was a pretty good notion uv mine to take her ter ther new crib across the river. I kind uv got an idea that ther old one might be suspected by that cursed Double-Curve Dan."

"But he's drowned, mein tear."

"Yes, I know. I hope he is. But sometimes people don't git drowned just when you expect 'em to, and we don't want to take no chances. Now, I'm goin' back ter git some sleep. I jist came hyar to look over the ground an' that's nothin' else ter wait fer."

"Nein, mein tear. You vas right."

Dan heard the footsteps moving away, and like a flash he sprung into his clothes, and made his way to the board walk outside the building.

Scarcely knowing what he did, he rushed toward the landing, from which Red Gabe was just pushing off in his skiff, while Sol Nugent handled the rudder lines.

"Heah, you. Whar's de price ob yo' meal and bed," cried a voice, as the big, powerful hand of the colored waiter was laid upon the detective's shoulder, pulling him back against the side of the house with a bang.

"You confounded idiot! Let go of me," cried the detective in a rage, as he saw that Red Gabe had gained the open water and was just pulling under the bridge.

"Not till yo' pay—no sah!"

Quick to reflect, the detective ceased struggling with the waiter, and turned toward the house again with the muttered remark:

"Just as well, perhaps. Neither Gabe nor Sol saw me, and there would be no use in following them now. I know their plans anyhow."

"Ah, begorra, would yez? Thryin' to sneak away from me, wuz ye? Hould him toight, ye black blayguard. He's a dead b'ate, sure."

"Well, what a comedy of errors!" laughed the detective, as he suffered himself to be led into the house, the Irishman and negro holding him tightly by the arms, one on either side.

CHAPTER IX.

BOGGS TO THE RESCUE!

LET US FOLLOW THE SKIFF OF RED GABE WHEN HE SUPPOSED THAT HE HAD DROWNED BOTH DOUBLE-CURVE DAN AND TIM MARTIN AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIGHT ON THE RIVER IN THE RAIN ON THE NIGHT BEFORE.

IT WILL NECESSITATE OUR GOING BACK FOR A FEW HOURS, BUT IT WILL ENABLE US TO FOLLOW MORE INTELLIGENTLY THE EVENTS THAT ARE TO FOLLOW.

WHILE RED GABE WAS STRUGGLING WITH DOUBLE-CURVE DAN HE TOOK BUT LITTLE NOTICE OF TIM MARTIN, WHO HAD SPRUNG FROM HIS OWN BOAT INTO THE SKIFF. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE DETECTIVE WAS A MORE DANGEROUS FOE THAN THE IRISHMAN, AND HE LET TIM'S BLOWS RAIN UPON HIS HEAD, NECK AND BACK WITHOUT CONSIDERING THEM WORTH SERIOUS ATTENTION UNTIL HE MANAGED TO THROW DAN MANLY OVERBOARD.

AS HE SAW THE DETECTIVE TUMBLE INTO THE WATER, AND THEN DISAPPEAR IN THE DARKNESS, HE THOUGHT IT SUCH AN EASY AND CONVENIENT WAY OF GETTING RID OF A TROUBLESOME CUSTOMER THAT HE DETERMINED ON THE INSTANT TO APPLY IT TO TIM MARTIN.

"GIT OUT UV THIS, YER HOWLING JACKASS," HE GROWLED, AND WITH THAT PECAULIAR WRESTLING TRICK KNOWN AS A "GRAPEVINE TWIST," HE HAD RENDERED POOR TIM POWERLESS, AND HURLED HIM FAR INTO THE SEETHING WATERS.

"NOW, SOL, KEEP YER EYES OPEN, AN' EF YER SEE EITHER UV THEM FELLERS NIGH THEIR BOAT, KNOCK 'EM ON THE HEAD WITH THEIR BUTT UV YER PISTOL!"

"YES, MEIN TEAR, VITH PLEASURE," RESPONDED SOL, AND THE TONE IN WHICH HE SPOKE INDICATED THAT IT REALLY WOULD GIVE HIM PLEASURE TO SETTLE EITHER TIM OR THE DETECTIVE WITH AN UGLY CRACK ON THE SKULL.

RED GABE SETLED HIMSELF TO THE OARS, AND PULLED WITH STEADY, POWERFUL STROKES UP THE RIVER, UNDER HIGH BRIDGE AND ALONG THE COMPARATIVELY NARROW STREAM FOR PERHAPS A QUARTER OF A MILE. THEN HE TURNED THE HEAD OF THE BOAT SHARPLY TO THE RIGHT, AND RAN UP ON THE BANK ON THE MORRISANIA SIDE, BELOW THE RAILROAD.

A SMALL WOODEN HOUSE OF ONE STORY LAY ON, RATHER THAN STOOD, UPON THE SOFT, SLUDGY MUD OF THE SHORE, AND AS SOON AS THE NOSE OF THE BOAT STRUCK THE BANK, RED GABE LEAPED ASHORE, AND KNOCKED THREE DISTINCT RAPS UPON THE OLD BUT SOLID DOOR OF THE HOUSE.

"TAI'NT NO USE YER BANGING AT THAT DOOR," SAID MOTHER COLLINS. "THAR AIN'T NO ONE THAR."

"GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT; BUT IT IS ALLERS EZ WELL TER MAKE SURE, YER KNOW. I DON'T WANT TER GO BOUNCIN' INTO NO PLACE 'THOUT I KNOW EZ IT'S SAFE."

"HYAR'S THE KEY," INTERRUPTED MOTHER COLLINS. "I ALLERS KEEP IT WITH THE OTHERS IN MY BUNCH."

She stepped out of the boat, and hurling Red Gabe aside, opened the door and went into the house with the air of a proprietor.

"BRING IN THEIR GIRL WHILE I LIGHT A FIRE."

Red Gabe obeyed by seizing Marion by the wrist and dragging her out of the boat, without extraordinary roughness, but also without much ceremony, and leading her into the house.

"BRING IN THEIR FELLER FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE BOAT," HE CALLED TO SOL. "HE AIN'T NO USE LYIN' THAR."

"AIN'T MOOCH USE NOWHERE, IS HE?" CHUCKLED THE LITTLE MAN, AS HE UNTIED THE ROPE BY WHICH BOGGS HAD BEEN SECURED TO ONE OF THE SEATS, AND WHICH ALONE HAD PREVENTED HIS TRYING TO TAKE A HAND IN THE SCRIMMAGE THAT ENDED IN THE THROWING OVERBOARD OF TIM MARTIN AND DAN MANLY.

Boggs submitted quietly to being led into the house by Nugent. His hands were tied before him by the rope that held him to the skiff, and his legs were so cramped from lying in the boat in a stiff position with the rain beating upon him, that he could not have made much resistance had he desired.

SLOW AS HE WAS IN SPEECH, BOGGS WAS NOT WITHOUT POWERS OF OBSERVATION, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY WERE QUICKENED BY DANGER. HE SAW THAT THERE WERE TWO ROOMS IN THIS LITTLE HOUSE. THE OUTER ONE, WHICH HE ENTERED FIRST, WAS A SORT OF WORKSHOP FOR A BOAT-BUILDER. A SKIFF LAY UPSIDE DOWN ON TRESTLES, AND A LARGE NEW PATCH ON THE DIRTY OLD KEEL SHOWED WHY IT WAS THERE. OARS—PROBABLY A DOZEN—WERE STACKED IN ONE CORNER, AND CHIPS WERE THICKLY STREWNS ON THE BROKEN FLOOR. CARPENTER'S TOOLS LAY AROUND, AND A MODEL OF A YACHT SCUDDING ALONG UNDER BARE POLES STOOD UPON A SHELF OVER THE LOW DOORWAY LEADING TO THE NEXT ROOM.

IN THE INNER ROOM, WHICH WAS PART KITCHEN, PART BEDROOM, THERE BEING A BEDSTEAD IN ONE CORNER AND A COOK-STOVE IN ANOTHER, MOTHER COLLINS HAD ALREADY COMMENCED PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMFORT OF HERSELF AND HER COMPANIONS. SHE HAD PUT A QUANTITY OF THE CHIPS INTO THE STOVE, AND THEY WERE BLAZING AWAY IN A CHEERFUL MANNER CALCULATED TO MAKE ONE FORGET ALL ABOUT THE MISERABLE WEATHER OUTSIDE.

ALL STOOD AROUND THE STOVE EXCEPT MARION, WHO, COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED, LAY UPON THE BED IN A SEMI-CONSCIOUS CONDITION, IN WHICH SHE FELT AS IF SHE DID NOT CARE PARTICULARLY WHAT BECAME OF HER.

FOR ABOUT TEN MINUTES MOTHER COLLINS ALLOWED THEM ALL TO ENJOY THE GENIAL WARMTH IN SILENCE, EVERY ONE BEING BUSY WITH HIS OWN THOUGHTS. THEN, WITH A BUSTLE, SHE BESTIRRED HERSELF AND ISSUED HER EDICT:

"GIT OUTTER THIS, ALL YOU MEN. LIGHT UP THE LITTLE STOVE IN THE OTHER ROOM, AND GO INTO IT. GUESS YER DON'T NEED NOTHIN' TER EAT AN' DRINK NOW. YER WON'T GIT IT EF YER DO. I'LL COOK BREAKFAST ARTER I'VE HAD ER SLEEP, BUT NOT AFIRE. GIT NOW. I WANT TER GIT THIS HYAR GIRL DRY AN' PUT HER TO BED. SHE'S TOO VALL'ABLE NOW FER US TER LET HER DIE, AND SHE'S PRETTY SICK, WITH THE RAIN AN' ONE THING AN' ANOTHER."

MOTHER COLLINS EMPHASIZED HER WORDS BY GIVING SOL NUGENT A VIGOROUS SHOVE TOWARD THE DOOR, AND THE OLD MAN, WITH BOGGS AT THE END OF THE ROPE, WENT OUT OF THE ROOM WITHOUT QUESTION, FOLLOWED BY RED GABE.

THE DOOR WAS SHUT AND BOLTED, AND THEN GABE LIGHTED A FIRE IN A LITTLE STOVE THAT STOOD IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM, BEHIND THE UPURNED BOAT.

"SIT DOWN, THAR, YOU," COMMANDED GABE, POINTING TO A STOOL NEAR THE STOVE, WHEN THE FIRE HAD BEEN LIGHTED AND THE TEMPERATURE OF THE ROOM HAD ARisen TO A COMFORTABLE POINT.

BOGGS OBEDIED.

"SOL, COME OVER HYAR."

NUGENT AND THE TOUGH RETIRED TO A CORNER OUT OF THE HEARING OF BOGGS AND HELD A WHISPED CONSULTATION FOR TWO OR THREE MINUTES. THEN GABE SAID ALOUD:

"COME OUT HYAR, SOL. I WANT TER SHOW YER HOW TER FIX THEIR SKIFF SO SHE WON'T FLOAT AWAY."

GABE OPENED THE OUTER DOOR AS HE SPOKE AND SOL SAW THAT THE RAIN HAD CEASED, AND THAT A FEW STARS WERE PEEPING THROUGH THE CLOUDS.

"SOL, YOU JUST STAND NIGH THE DOOR OUTSIDE, AN' EF ANY ONE COMES OUT, SHOOT HIM DOWN," WHISPERED GABE JUST LOUD ENOUGH FOR BOGGS TO HEAR.

"ALL RIGHT, MEIN TEAR—ALL RIGHT," RESPONDED SOL, AS HE DREW A HEAVY REVOLVER AND ALLOWED IT TO FLASH IN THE LIGHT OF THE LAMP THAT HUNG AGAINST THE WALL, WITH A REFLECTOR BEHIND IT, FOR THE ESPECIAL BENEFIT OF BOGGS.

THEN THE DOOR WAS CLOSED, AND THE BOY HEARD THE MUTTERING OF THE TWO DESPERADOES OUTSIDE FOR A FEW MINUTES, UNTIL IT DIED AWAY, AS IF THEY WERE WALKING FURTHER FROM THE HOUSE.

BOGGS HAD BEEN SITTING QUIETLY ON HIS STOOL SINCE HE HAD BEEN DEPOSITED THERE BY GABE, BUT HE HAD NOT BEEN IDLE, SO FAR AS HIS THOUGHTS WERE CONCERNED.

THE RESULT WAS SEEN AS SOON AS HE COULD NO LONGER DISTINGUISH THE VOICES OF GABE AND SOL NUGENT.

BOGGS'S WRISTS WERE TIED TIGHTLY, AND ALTHOUGH HE HAD NEVER CEASED, ALL NIGHT, TRYING TO LOSEN THE CORDS, THE ONLY EFFECT OF HIS ENDEAVORS HAD BEEN TO MAKE THE SKIN SORE. HE COULD NOT FLATTER HIMSELF THAT THERE WAS ANY PERCEPABLE EASING OF HIS BONDS.

"IF—THESE—FELLERS—WILL—KEEP—OUT—A—FEW—MINUTES—I—SHALL—BE—all—RIGHT," HE MUTTERED, AS HE LOOKED AROUND THE ROOM TO MAKE SURE THAT NO ONE WAS SECRETLY WATCHING HIM.

HE COULD NOT BE SURE OF THIS, BECAUSE THERE

MIGHT BE CRACKS OR PEEP-HOLES IN THE WALLS OF WHICH HE KNEW NOTHING, BUT HE SATISFIED HIMSELF THAT THERE WERE NO VISIBLE MEANS FOR EAVESDROPPERS TO WATCH HIM. THERE WAS BUT ONE WINDOW, A LARGE ONE, AND IT WAS CLOSELY SHUTTERED AND BARRED INSIDE. IT WAS NOT CONSIDERED DESIRABLE BY THE PEOPLE BELONGING TO THE HOUSE TO BE WATCHED BY CURIOUS STRANGERS EVIDENTLY.

"I—DON'T—CARE—WHETHER—THEY—SEE—ME—OR—NOT. THEY—CAN'T—DO—ANYTHING—MORE—TO—ME—EXCEPT—KILL—ME—AND—it—WOULDN'T—PAY—THEM—to—DO—that," REFLECTED BOGGS, PHILOSOPHICALLY.

HE WALKED OVER TO A BENCH UNDER THE SHUTTERED WINDOW UPON WHICH HE HAD NOTICED A GLEAMING HATCHET AMONG OTHER TOOLS.

"WONDER—WHY—THEY—LEFT—THIS—HERE. THEY—MIGHT—HAVE—KNOWN—WHAT—I—WOULD—DO," CHUCKLED BOGGS, THROWING HIS MOUTH WIDE OPEN AS IF HE INTENDED TO EMIT A HORSE LAUGH.

WITH HIS WRISTS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BLADE OF THE HATCHET, HE SAWED THE CORD FOR A FEW SECONDS, AND SOON HAD THE SATISFACTION OF FINDING HIS HANDS FREE.

AGAIN HE OPENED HIS MOUTH, AND THIS TIME HE HAD THE GREATEST DIFFICULTY IN HOLDING BACK A LOUD GUFWAFF BUT INDULGING IN NOTHING MORE STARTLING THAN A CHUCKLE.

"THEY—DIDN'T—THINK—it—WORTH—WHILE—to—SEARCH—ME—EITHER. TE—he!"

HE DREW FROM A BELT HE WORE BENEATH HIS COAT THE SHORT BLACKSMITH'S HAMMER ALREADY REFERRED TO, AND PATTED IT LOVINGLY.

"BETTER—THAN—all—the—GUNS—EVER—MADE! THAT'S—WHAT—YOU—are," HE CHUCKLED. "NOW—for—BUSINESS!"

THERE WAS NONE OF HIS USUAL DELIBERATION IN BOGGS'S MOVEMENTS NOW. HE SLIPPED AROUND THE ROOM ACTIVELY ENOUGH, LISTENING FIRST AT THE DOOR LEADING TO THE INNER APARTMENT.

"ALL—QUIET. GUESS—they're—both—asleep."

HE STOOD FOR A MOMENT REFLECTING AS TO HIS NEXT MOVE, RAISING HIS HAMMER THREATENINGLY AS HE THOUGHT HE HEARD A SLIGHT SOUND AT THE OUTER DOOR.

"WIND—I—GUESS. IF—that—FELLER—" HE FINISHED HIS SENTENCE BY BRINGING THE HAMMER DOWN UPON THE EMPTY AIR WITH A HEARTY SWING THAT SUGGESTED THE PLEASURE HE WOULD HAVE FELT IN VISITING IT UPON THE HEAD OF EITHER RED GABE OR SOL NUGENT.

HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE TWO RASCALS WERE NEAR THE HOUSE, FOR HE HAD OVERHEARD SCRAPS OF CONVERSATION WHILE HE HAD LAIN IN THE BOTTOM OF THE BOAT THAT GAVE HIM AN INKLING OF THEIR INTENTIONS. HE HAD RIGHTLY CONJECTURED THAT RED GABE'S ELABORATE DIRECTIONS TO SOL TO WATCH THE HOUSE AND SHOOT DOWN ANYBODY LEAVING IT WERE INTENDED ONLY TO ACT AS A WARNING TO HIM (BOGGS), AND HE CHUCKLED AS HE THOUGHT HOW EASILY HE HAD SEEN THROUGH THE TRICK.

"NOW—to—OPEN—that—DOOR."

HE SELECTED FROM AMONG THE TOOLS A SCREW-DRIVER, AND, WITH THE DEXTERITY OF A MECHANIC, SOON HAD THE LOCK OFF THE OUTER DOOR, AND HAD LAD IT ON THE FLOOR.

"KIND—OF—THEM—to—LOCK—ME—in—but—they—must—have—forgotten—the—screw—driver."

WITH HIS MOUTH OPENED TO ITS UTTERMOST WIDTH, BOGGS SOFTLY OPENED THE DOOR AND LOOKED OUT INTO THE NIGHT.

AS HE HAD EXPECTED, THE BOAT WAS NOT TO BE SEEN, AND GABE AND NUGENT HAD BOTH DISAPPEARED.

"GOOD!"

HAVING EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION WITH THE ARRANGEMENTS SO FAR BY THIS ONE WORD, BOGGS WENT INSIDE AND CLOSED THE DOOR AGAIN.

HE STEPPED TO THE INNER DOOR AND LISTENED. ALL WAS QUIET.

"NOW—MONTGOMERY—BOGGS—you—must—get—that—girl—out—somehow—without—letting—the—old—woman—know," SAID THE BOY TO HIMSELF, IN A WHISPER. "HALLOA!—WHAT'S—that?"

A THUNDERING NOISE THAT SHOOK THE CRAZY LITTLE HOUSE AS IF IT WERE GOING TO FALL TO PIECES. IN A SECOND THE BOY REALIZED WHAT IT WAS AND DETERMINED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT.

"IT'S—a—TRAIN—and—it—has—STOPPED—at—the—station—above—there."

HURRIEDLY THE BOY SELECTED TWO STOUT CHISELS AND CAREFULLY AND SOFTLY FORCED THEM BETWEEN THE DOOR AND DOOR-POST OF THE INNER ROOM. THEN HE PAUSED, WITH HIS HAMMER READY FOR USE AND LISTENED.

ALL WAS STILL.

"GOOD."

HIS MOUTH WIDENED AND ONE LOW, DISTINCT CHUCKLE CAME FROM IT.

IN A MOMENT THE RUMBLING THAT HAD STARTLED HIM BEFORE RECOMMENCED, ACCOMPANIED BY THE

uff-puffing of a locomotive, as the train pulled out of the station.

Nearer and nearer it came, and louder and louder grew the rumbling.

It seemed to envelop the house, above, below, around, and to be taking it up in a mighty embrace, to dash it away into space. It was like a roaring monster, pitiless, all-powerful, and noisy to the last degree.

Nearer and nearer, until now it was actually upon the house, and all its inmates in one grand crash!

Now was Boggs's time!

With a wrench into which he threw all his strength, he tore at the two cuisels, and with a dull crack, that was completely swallowed up in the thundering of the passing train, the door gave way and flew open, as the train dashed away on its way toward New York.

Boggs dropped to the floor in the ante-room and waited. Had he awakened Mother Collins? That was the question.

"What's that?" muttered the Jezebel, as she half turned over on the bed, and immediately resumed her broken slumber, without waiting for an answer.

Boggs waited one, two, three minutes crouched on the floor of the outer apartment. He wanted to make sure that Mother Collins was sound asleep.

At last he was satisfied, from the regular stentorian breathing of the good lady that she was away in the land of dreams. The room was in darkness save from the glow from the stove and such rays as could steal in through the partly-open door from the lamp in the other room.

Boggs walked boldly into the apartment, with his hammer in his hand, and leaned over the bed upon which lay Mother Collins and Marion Ward. Both were fully dressed, and each had a warm shawl around her, the property of the old woman.

Marion was lying on the inside and Boggs leaned across Mother Collins and gently shook the girl by the shoulder.

"Now, Mother Collins, sleep on! Sleep on if you survive this night. Sleep on, nor make one movement! Sleep on, for as surely as you open your eyes and try to thwart this boy's rescue of the young girl at your side, you will die!"

Boggs held the hammer above Mother Collins's head, and he would have struck her senseless with it with as little compunction as he would have killed a mad-dog had she awakened.

"Marion!" he whispered.

The girl opened her eyes and for a second there was an expression in them that warned Boggs of her disposition to scream. He clapped his left hand over her mouth, and whispered again.

"Marion—Don't—be—afraid. It's—Boggs—Boggs!"

She nodded and he knew the danger of her screaming was over.

"Get-up!"

She sat up on the bed, and Boggs, reaching over, assisted her to stand upright upon it, all the time keeping a watchful eye upon Mother Collins, who slumbered—snored in perfect unconsciousness of anything wrong.

"How shall I get over her, Boggs?" said Marion, more by the motion of her lips than in any audible words.

Boggs's reply was by taking her under the arms with his two great, strong hands, and lifting her over the woman and to the floor as if she were a mere child.

Without wasting words the boy led Marion swiftly out of the house and up to the railroad track.

"Now run as well as you can on the ties, and we will soon be all right," chuckled Boggs, as he looked back at the house they had just left, and in which Mother Collins was still peacefully snoring.

Marion looked back too, for a moment, and then fixing her bright brown eyes upon Boggs's face, which at this particular moment looked all mouth, as he indulged in one of his silent grins, said, in her deep gratitude:

"Boggs, you are the handsomest young man I ever saw."

"Ha, ha, ha!" guffawed Montgomery Boggs.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

It was nearly ten o'clock on the night following the events narrated in the preceding chapters.

The scene was the concert-room of the beer-gardens on the Harlem side of the High Bridge, and a lively scene it was.

It was rather difficult to distinguish everything or anything at first on account of two cloud of tobacco smoke that hung like incense over all, but when you had become a little used to this you could see that there were some hundreds of people sitting about at the little tables or reclining comfortably on other chairs against the walls in a state of calm enjoyment peculiar to the working American in the hours of recreation.

Waiters were running hither and thither with lemonade, beer and other liquids, or with sandwiches, oysters and fried chicken, as the capricious tastes of the patrons demanded.

All was bustle, light and merriment.

There was a great deal of noise of laughter and conversation—so much, indeed, that one hardly noticed the sound of the piano in one end of the hall. Yet there was a piano too, and the gentleman seated at it was thumping away with a vigor that indicated a determination to earn his salary by hard work and at the same time get all the sound possible out of the instrument.

The noise was at its height, and merriment ran riot, when a tall gentlemanly-looking man strolled into the garden and glanced into the concert room through the open windows.

It was Vandeker Ward the banker.

"Oh, my daughter! Shall I see her again?" he muttered, as he looked at the groups at the tables inside and outside the room.

He strolled along the garden path to the end of the room and turned to walk back intending to enter the doorway facing the street, when he found himself confronted by Sol Nugent.

The old man stopped and looked inquiringly into the face of the banker, and, without a word, walked on.

"What does that mean, I wonder?" mused the banker, as he stood watching Nugent winding his way along a side path with head bent and thoughts apparently far away.

He continued his stroll, but had not gone more than a dozen yards when a bullet-headed, red-haired tough-looking young man seemed to start up out of the earth, he appeared so suddenly.

The banker started involuntarily, for he saw that the tough-looking gentleman had transfixed him with the gaze of two small, piercing eyes, and was holding up a playing-card, the ace of diamonds, upon which was rudely drawn, in black ink, a mark, thus, H.

The banker had opened his mouth to speak, when the man, putting his finger to his lip to enjoin silence, returned the card to his pocket and turned off into a side path, whence he was soon lost to view behind a clump of fir-trees overhanging the river.

"Mysterious!" commented the banker. "But, I suppose they are afraid of being trapped. Ah, if they knew how all other thoughts are swallowed up in my longing to regain Marion, they would not fear."

He turned wearily into the concert room, and taking a seat near the athletic pianist, watched that musician as he drew forth "Down Went McGinty" with the whole power of the long-suffering piano.

"I wonder what next, and where can Dan Manly be?" he muttered. "I thought he would have been here to make the arrangements for me."

Suddenly a large rough hand was laid upon his shoulder and a hoarse voice whispered in his ear:

"Don't look around! Are you ready to make the bargain?"

"Yes."

"Got it with yer?"

"What?"

"What?" repeated the husky whisper, with a disgusted rising reflection. "Why, ther boodle, in course."

"I can write you a check."

"Not much."

"Why not?"

"What d'ye take me fer?"

At this point the banker disregarded the injunction laid upon him and looked around into the face of the tough gentleman whom he had left in the garden a few moments before, but who had, by some path known to himself, arrived in the room almost as soon as the banker.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" said Mr. Ward, almost involuntarily.

"Yes, but I can't say any more to you just now. I don't want ter give myself away."

Thus speaking, the tough young man in whom the reader has doubtless already recognized Red Gabe, disappeared in the peculiar melting manner already referred to, and the banker was again alone, with the hard-working pianist bang-

ing away in front of him and dozens of noisy groups at the small tables around.

Another hand, this time shriveled and thin, and evidently that of an old man, was laid on his shoulder, and a strong whiff of onions preceded a wheezy whisper:

"Checks von't do. Moost have der gash."

"But I have no cash with me. You don't suppose I carry fifty thousand dollars in my pocket, do you?" asked the banker testily, his business instincts revolting against such an irregular idea.

"Nein. I don't know v'ree you keep it, und I don'd care, but you must produce it if you want your daughter."

"Very well—I—"

"Hoosh! some one looking. I vill come back later. Vait!" interrupted the whisperer, and the banker was again alone.

When Sol Nugent left Mr. Ward this time it was because he had seen an elderly, military-looking man, with a fierce white mustache of the kind known as "cavalry," and the lower part of his face covered with a beard of the same frosty hue, watching him and the banker with some curiosity.

The stranger sat at a table some distance from the banker, with a cigar between his lips, and had apparently been taking no particular notice of any one until Sol Nugent saw that his keen eyes were fixed upon him, while the shaggy white brows almost met in an attentive frown.

It was only for a few seconds that he looked at Sol and Mr. Ward, for, as soon as Sol looked at him he turned his gaze away lazily, and seemed to be deeply enjoying the music of the indefatigable piano-player.

Sol hurried out of the garden through a side-door, and as he glanced back into the room the white-whiskered stranger was still puffing meditatively at his cigar, and evidently thinking of nothing but his present comfort and his enjoyment of the music. Mr. Ward had allowed his chin to sink upon his breast, and he too was not taking any account of Sol and his doings.

"But I don't know v'at it means. I'll ask Gabe," muttered the old man, as he threaded his way among the tables to the clump of fir-trees at the edge of the bank.

"Well?" questioned Gabe, as he reclined on a bench, with his eyes fixed on the river below, in which the reflection of myriads of stars danced in the waves.

"He's all right, mein tear, but he hasn't got der gash with him."

"Curse him, I know. But we'll make him bring it hyar, all ther same," returned Gabe, as he sat upright on the bench, and banged his fist on the back of it to emphasize his words. "We'll make him do it."

"All right, mein tear. V'atever you say, goes."

"In course it does."

"Bring him out hyar, while I talk ter him. We can't finish ther bizness ter-night, I s'pose, but we kin git our arrangements all right, anyhow."

Sol turned away, and in another minute was in the concert-room again. Mr. Ward still sat in the same place behind the pianist, but Sol noticed that the man with the white mustache and beard had disappeared.

"So mooch der better," commented Nugent.

Then he leaned over the banker and whispered:

"Follow me."

Vandeker Ward started up, but Sol Nugent had glided away so quickly that he had already reached the side-door leading into the garden. The banker followed him, and before he expected it found himself in the company of Red Gabe and Sol Nugent behind the clump of firs.

"Sit down," directed Gabe, briefly, with an air of authority that the banker would have resented most decidedly at another time and under ordinary circumstances.

As it was, however, he felt that he could afford to waive a great deal of dignity if it could restore his daughter to him, as he sat on the bench by the side of the tough, without demur.

"Now, sir, I ain't got no interest in this hyar thing myself," went on Gabe, "but I represent another party ez bez. In course you understand that?"

The banker thought he understood that Gabe was lying, but he merely nodded acquiescence.

"Very wal, then. Now, ef you bed brought ther money with yer ter-night I could hev handed it over ter ther other party, an' I s'pose he would hev done his part uv ther contract. I s'pose he would."

"Suppose he would?" echoed the banker.

"Yes; that's my idee."

"Coorse he don'd know, mein tear!" broke in the little old man, Nugent.

For a moment the banker looked in a dazed way from one to the other of the conspirators, who each returned his gaze with the nonchalance of men who were masters of the situation, and knew it.

"Suppose he could!" he muttered again, dreamily. Then, as he realized fully the insolence of the fellows who were trying to force from him the payment of a fortune without promising anything in return, he could contain himself no longer.

"You scoundrel!" he cried, bending his face toward that of Gabe, who had thrown himself easily back upon the seat, as if satisfied that he could do as he pleased with the banker.

"What's that?"

Gabe had resumed an upright posture in a second, as his hand stole ominously behind him.

"Oh, Moses! V'at vas dis?" joined in Sol.

"You villain! I'll—"

The banker finished his sentence by seizing Red Gabe by the throat and shaking him as if he had been a kitten.

Gabe had not put his hand behind him for nothing, however, and the banker saw a gleaming bowie-knife in his grasp.

"Cuss yer!" growled Gabe, for even in the excitement of the moment he knew that it would not do to make noise enough to attract attention. "Cuss yer! I'll settle this hyar matter right now."

He struggled to free himself from his antagonist's hold, but to his astonishment he found that the quiet, dignified banker was as strong as a lion and as active as a cat.

The two men had been leaning over the seat so far, but now they rolled over on the gravel, the banker's right hand twisted in the handkerchief around the tough's neck, while with his right he kept the knife from striking him.

"Let go o' my neck! You're chokin' uv me!" gurgled Gabe.

"That's what I intend to do, you rascal! Where is my daughter?"

"I don't know."

"You lie!"

A tighter twist on the handkerchief, and the tough's eyes looked wild and staring in the reflection of the moon that peeped from behind a bank of clouds at this moment to see the fun.

Over and over again, and now the two were wedged against a light fence that protected the edge of the precipitous bank running down to the river.

Mr. Ward still held the tough firmly by the throat, and the bowie-knife was, so far, powerless to do harm. But the fence was cracking ominously under the terrible strain, and Sol Nugent, who had been dodging around the combatants with a pistol in his hand, but afraid to use it on account of the noise, now exhibited more real concern than at any time before.

"Mind, Gabe! Fighd away from der fence! fighd away from der fence! If you vas ter drag him over und kill him, v'ere would our money be? You moost not let him die. Only wound him, dot's all. Only wound him."

With his ordinary business acumen Sol had realized at once that if the banker were killed, there would be no money value in Marion. The fifty-thousand-dollar bargain would be off then permanently, because it was not likely that the banker's executors, whoever they might be, would make such an extravagant arrangement with the abductors, having no parental feeling to actuate them. So when Sol saw that there was danger of the wrestling ending in the combatants breaking through the fence and being dashed to pieces on the rocks below he considered it time for the fight to stop. He did not care for Gabe, but the banker represented so much capital, and his life was valuable to Sol on that account.

The fight had now become desperate, and the fence cracked more and more.

The banker held to the tough's throat with the tenacity of deadly hate. He cared for nothing at that moment but to revenge himself upon the man who he felt convinced had stolen his daughter.

"Cuss yer! I'll fix yer now," hissed Gabe, at last, as, with an almost herculean effort, he tore away from his adversary and at the same time got his knife free.

There was a flash of bright steel, as the tough got the banker under him and held him down with his knee in the prostrate man's chest. Vanlecker Waril felt that his last moment had come, and prepared to meet his fate like a man.

Ere the knife could descend, however, it was suddenly whipped out of the tough's hand and sent spinning over the precipice at the same in-

stant that Gabe himself was dragged away from the banker and lurched violently against the garden seat under the lee of the clump of firs.

"Sorry to disturb you, gentlemen! But I never could help taking a hand in a fight when I saw an opening. Pardon me, won't you?"

"Who ther deuce ar' you?" howled Gabe, breathless, but in a perfect frenzy of passion.

"It vas dot white-whiskered man v'at I told you about," said Sol.

"You are quite right, my friend. But my real name is Dan Manly, or Double-Curve Dan, as I am sometimes called," said the stranger, suavely, as he took off his white whiskers, and smiled at Red Gabe and Sol Nugent in turn.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW.

WHEN Marion, in a burst of gratitude, told Boggs that he was handsome, she meant what she said. The awkward, ungainly, wide-mouthed boy really looked handsome. Had he not released her from the clutches of the terrible Mother Collins for the second time, and had he not shown that he was brave personally as well as fertile of resource? Yes, Montgomery Boggs was beautiful in her sight, on the principle that "handsome is that handsome does."

Boggs would have enjoyed a good, hearty guffaw, but he felt that it would not be safe just now, so he bottled up his feelings and led the girl swiftly along the railroad track toward the city.

"Where are we going, Boggs?" asked Marion, when, having walked for half an hour, she felt that she was safe, temporarily at least, from Mother Collins and the rest of her enemies.

"Where—are—we-going?" echoed Boggs. "Why—home—to-be—sure. And—I—should—think—you would—be—very—glad—to—get—there."

"Home? What, not to Twentieth street?" said Marion, alarmed.

"Who—sail—anything—about—Twentieth—street. I—guess—Tim—will—take—you—there—when—your father gets back from Europe but not before."

"Yes, yes; I should not be safe there now alone. They would take me away again. Then, there's that young man who came into the shop to have his pistol mended—Double-Curve Dan—he is in league with them. I am more afraid of him than any of them."

"I—don't—know—about—that," observed Boggs, dubiously.

He had begun to have a dawning notion that perhaps Dan Manly was not so bad as Marion believed, especially when he remembered the fight in the boat, the throwing of the detective into the river, and the few words he had caught of the subsequent colloquy between Red Gabe and Sol Nugent.

"I shall be glad to see Katie again," said Marion, as she involuntarily quickened her pace at the thought of soon being again in the arms of her good-natured protector in the little parlor in Myrtle avenue, Brooklyn.

It is unnecessary to follow Boggs and Marion on their journey from the little house in Morrisania to Tim Martin's house in Brooklyn. Suffice it to say that it was six o'clock in the morning when they alighted from a street-car at the corner, and that the sun was by this time shining in all the glory of a beau'ul September day upon the awakening traffic of the busy city.

"Oh, there's Katie," exclaimed Marion, joyfully. Sure enough, there was Katie Martin at the front door of the little musical instrument store, looking anxiously up and down the street.

At this moment her gaze was turned the other way, and Marion ran forward and threw her two arms around the Irishwoman's neck before she was aware of the girl's presence.

"Katie!"

"Saints presarve us! Mary! Is it yerself, me darlin'? Oh, Mary!"

Such a hug as Marion Ward received at that moment would have stopped the breath of any one but a healthy young girl with a well-spring of vitality that even extraordinary fatigue and trouble could not quench.

Marion returned the hug with interest, while Montgomery Boggs stood looking on with an imbecile grin of enjoyment that was to the last degree feeble and insane.

"Me darlin! Oi thought Oi'd never see yez ag'in, so Oi did."

Katie had released the girl from her embrace, and stood holding her by the hands at arm's length, with all the love and tenderness of her warm nature beaming in her eyes.

Suddenly she noticed Boggs, and flew at him without the slightest warning.

Seizing him by the shoulders, she gave him a vigorous jerk to arrange his ideas, and then demanded, threateningly:

"Phware hev you been, ye sphalpeen? Phwat did yez do wid my husband?"

"Your—husband!" blurted Boggs, trembling, for he always held the robust Mrs. Martin in the deepest awe.

"Yis, me husband—Tim Martin. Phwat hev yez done wid him? He wint after you to help yez foind Mary."

"Did—he?" asked Boggs feebly.

"Did he?" repeated Katie in a rage. "Did he, ye long-legged baboon! Don't Oi tell yez he did! D'y'e think Oi'm a liar? Faix, Oi've a moind to break yez in two pieces, so Oi hev."

"I—don't—know."

"What is the matter, Katie?" interposed Marion, gently. "I do not think Boggs has seen Tim at all. And, oh, Katie, he has been so good. If it had not been for him I should not be here now. Mother Collins and the others had me again, and—and—they took me to that awful cellar, and after that in a boat up the river in the rain to a place beyond Ham-lin, and—and—"

The girl here broke down in a storm of sobs, and Katie, releasing Boggs, took her to her bosom again, and smothered her golden hair with a loving hand that it seemed hardly possible could be the same that had a moment before held the boy so firmly and given him such a vigorous shaking.

"There, there! Don't yez cry, me darlint. Come indoors and Oi'll give yez a noice cup of tea. Then Oi'll put yez to bed, an' yez'll be all right ag'in be the afternoon."

She led the girl into the store, and through the back workshop into the little parlor, where everything looked to Marion the very ideal of home.

Katie had not troubled herself further about Boggs. She was only anxious to make her girl comfortable, and the first thing toward this end, she considered, was to give her some breakfast.

In an hour's time—during which she had positively forbidden Marion to talk after she had told her kind friend that the black shawl she had worn over her head was the property of Mother Collins, and which caused Mrs. Martin to throw that article of apparel on the floor and stamp on it—Marion was ushered into her own little bedroom and put tenderly to bed, with the injunction to lie there till she was called.

The excitement and fatigue she had undergone during the past twelve hours, together with the hearty breakfast she had been compelled to take, were calculated to make the girl appreciate her bed, and in a very few minutes after Katie Martin had left the room Marion was oblivious of all her surroundings and sleeping as only the young and healthy can.

"Phwere's that Boggs. I wonder?" muttered Katie, as she hustled about in the sitting-room, cleaning away her dishes and putting the furniture straight, for she was, above all, a good housekeeper. "Phwhere can that boy be? Faix, he slipped from me memory intoirely, so he did."

She went into the little workshop and cried:

"Boggs, Boggs! Come forening me."

No answer.

"Well, well, if he ain't asleep, Oi'm a Dootchman," she added, in a lower tone, as she opened the door of the store and looked in.

Sure enough, poor Boggs, worn out, and perhaps somewhat disheartened by his reception by Mrs. Martin, had thrown himself down on the floor behind the counter, with his head upon a violin case, and was snoring away with his mouth open, as comfortably as if he had been on his own cot-bed in the attic over the store.

"Poor boy! Maybe I wuz hard on him. But, be the powers, I want ter know something about Tim."

She shook the boy, and with some difficulty got him to open his eyes. Then she addressed herself to the task—anything but a light one—of getting an understanding of his whereabouts into his head. Boggs belonged to that heavy order of the human family that sleeps f'r five or ten minutes after it wakes up. Nothing but a wild stare and incoherent sounds could be got from him for some time in spite of Katie's vigorous shakings and sharp ejaculations.

"Oi'm askin' yez phwhere me husband, Tim, is. D'y'e moind me?"

"I—don't—know."

"Yez haven't seen him, then?"

"Eh?"

Boggs was sitting on the floor, looking up into Katie Martin's face, and yawning as if his head would fall into two pieces.

"Wake up, ye omadhaun! Wake up!" said Katie, sharply, as she gave him another impatient shake.

"Phwhere is me husband, Tim?"

"Tim?"

"Oh, saints presarve us! If this boy ain't enough to toire any one's patience!"

Here Boggs seemed to come to his senses somewhat, for as he looked at her something like a grin illuminated his features, as he said, slowly:

"Yes—I—seen—Tim!"

"Phwhere?"

"Where?" repeated Boggs, vacantly.

"Yes, phwhere?" emphasizing her words with a shake that made the boy's teeth rattle.

"In—the—river!"

"In the river!" shrieked Katie. "Phwat do yez mean? Be hivens, Oi'll kill yez if yez don't answer me inquiry!"

With a great deal of trouble Katie elicited from Boggs all the events of the night, including the struggle on the boat, and the throwing overboard of Tim after Double-Curve Dan.

When the boy arrived at this part of his narrative Katie could not contain herself any longer. She dragged Boggs to his feet and fairly trotted him about the store in her agitation.

"Och, me poor Tim! me poor Tim! Och, wurroo! Ye are gone, an' no one ter give yez daacent burial! Och, wurroo! Phwat shall I do?"

She threw Boggs from her, and seating herself on one of the stools in front of the counter, rocked herself to and fro, with her face in her hands, in an agony of grief.

"Why—don't—you—go—and—look—for—him? P'raps—he—wasn't—drowned. He—can—swim—can't he?"

Boggs spoke in his usual deliberate manner, but

there was so much reason in what he said that Katie was on the alert in an instant.

"Phwat's that ye say? My Tim swim? Of course he kin. Swim loike a dook. Phwere was it ye say he was choocked intil the river?"

"Near—High—Bridge—at—Harlem."

"That settles it. Oi'll go."

"Where?"

"To High Bridge, in coorse, ye fool! D'ye think Oi'm goin' ter Jerusalem? Oi'll inquire around High Bridge, an' faix, if he's in the neighborhood Oi'll foind him. Thrust me!"

Boggs nodded, as if he were quite willing to trust Mrs. Martin, and no doubt he was.

"Now, Boggs, Oi'm goin' to thry an' foind mo husband. Mary is in her room, asleep. Let her stay there till she comes out of her own accord."

"Yes."

"But you kape watch over the house till I come back, and don't let anybody in."

"Won't—I—keep—the—store—open?"

Mrs. Martin hesitated for a moment. Then she asked:

"You kin kape awake till Mary gits up, eh?"

"Yes—I-am—not—sleepy—now."

It was one of Boggs's peculiarities that although he could sleep for twelve hours at a stretch on occasion, he could do without any sleep at all for two days, if necessary, and he meant what he said when he declared that he was not sleepy.

"Well, then, kape the shtoe open an' tend to business, an' be on the watch for any uv that gang, 'cause I hold yez responsible for me girl's safety, ye understand that, now?"

Boggs nodded.

"Weil, then, moind yez do it."

Ten minutes later Katie Martin was on her way to the Brooklyn Suspension Bridge to take the cars for New York, and thence to Harlem.

Boggs closed the front door of the store, and arranged an electrical device that would sound a large gong if it were opened. Then he went into the little workshop and busied himself in repairing certain violins and an accordeon that had been left for the purpose two or three days, but had been neglected hitherto.

Boggs was a phlegmatic young man, and he worked as coolly and comfortably as if he had been in bed all night, instead of passing through a series of exciting adventures such as would have unfitted most people for regular work for a week.

He was so busy with his employment that four or five hours passed without his noticing the flight of time.

"There—that's—done—and—it's—as—good—as—new," he remarked, in contented tones, as he played "Sweet Violets" on a very rheumatic and wheezy old accordeon that he had been doctoring with glue, leather and mysterious little pieces of brass and steel. "A—splendid—instrument—almost—an—orchestra—by—itself."

He fell into a reverie of self-satisfaction as he contemplated his work, and smiled one of his widest smiles.

Suddenly he was aroused from his musing by a loud shriek from the little parlor.

To throw down the accordeon, throw open the door and rush into the parlor, was the work of but little more than a second.

Marion, pale and trembling, fell into his arms, and clasped him around the neck, as she pointed to a window that looked into the yard of the next house, and gasped:

"Oh, it was there—here!"

"What—what—what—was—there?" stammered Boggs.

"Her face! Oh! it was awful!" answered the girl, shuddering.

"Whose—whose—face? Who—was—it? Tell me."

Marion clung tighter to Boggs, looking fearfully at the window, as she whispered, almost inaudibly:

"Mother Collins!"

CHAPTER XII.

NEW MOVE.

The sudden revelation to Red Gabe, Sol Nugent and Vandeker Ward of Double-Curve Dan, in the person of the gentleman in the white whiskers and cavalry mustache had a different effect upon the three men.

All were astonished, but two of them were annoyed and frightened, while the third, Mr. Ward, was unaffectedly delighted.

"Cuss him! I thought ez he wuz drowned!" muttered Gabe.

"Sorry you are disappointed; but I could not help it," responded Dan Manly, airily.

"Durn his pictur! He hears everything," growled the tough, in a still lower tone.

"Exactly; it is my way to hear everything that goes on in my presence," smiled the detective, whose sense of hearing, it is almost unnecessary to state, was almost phenomenally acute.

Red Gabe had been gradually pulling himself together during this short dialogue, and was now sitting upon the bench, waiting sulkily for the next move on the part of anybody.

Sol Nugent, who had returned his pistol to his pocket, said nothing. It was his policy to be humble and unassuming under such circumstances, as the present, so that no one could say afterward that he had committed himself. In case the enemy got the best of the controversy this plan might save him trouble. Nothing like trying to make yourself safe anyhow, was Sol Nugent's motto.

"Wal, now you're here, what d'ye want?" inquired Gabe, in a bullying way peculiarly his own.

The young detective, replacing his false whiskers and mustache, deliberately took a cigar from his

pocket, bit off the end and lighted it before he answered:

"I am a friend of Mr. Ward."

"You're er friend uv the devil!"

"Excuse me; you are throwing a reflection upon this gentleman that he will be likely to resent if you repeat it," responded the detective, with a slight smile that was maddening to the tough.

"Wal, take ther reflection ter yerself, if yer like," growled Gabe. "What d'ye want?"

"I want to know why you did not meet me at Cooney Maul's place last night."

"None yer business!"

The mocking smile that played about the lips of Double-Curve Dan could not be concealed by the white mustache, and it was only by the exercise of the utmost powers of restraint that Gabe prevented himself flying at the throat of the detective.

"Dan, this is waste o' time. You know what my business is here," interrupted the banker. "Since you have revealed the fact that you are my agent in the matter, you may as well treat with these men. I am done with them."

"You are, eh?" sneered Gabe. "Wal, my friend what kin restore your daughter will p'raps be done with you if you don't come ter time. Now I tell yer, an' I can't deal with no one but principals."

"Oh, yes, you will," put in Dan Manly, quietly.

"Who'll make me?"

"I will!"

"How?"

The detective leaned forward and whispered in the tough's ear.

"What?" screamed Red Gabe. "You lie!"

"Oh, no, I do not," said Dan, quietly. "I'll appeal to Mr. Ward here, whether—"

"No, no!" almost screamed the tough, as he started up and placed his hand over the detective's mouth with an expression of terrible apprehension.

"Shut up!"

The detective contemptuously threw the hand away and smiled, as he said:

"Very well; I will say no more about that. But if I see any more signs of treachery on your part I will do what I whispered to y-u. You thought you had deceived me, did you not?"

"Oh, no, mein tear! He did not. It was an accident, dot vos. Why, he wouldn't hurt you for der world, don't you know," here broke in Sol Nugent, who had been anxiously looking for an opening to say something conciliatory.

"Shut yer mouth, you fool!" commanded Gabe, savagely.

"All right, mein tear!"

"Now, what are you going to do about this matter?" asked the detective, turning toward Gabe.

"Ther man ez I represent says he kin produce ther girl ef he gits ther money he wants—\$50,000."

"And if he does not get the money?"

"I dunno, but I guess Mr. Ward'll never see his daughter ag'in," replied Gabe, with an air of quiet desperation.

"Dan," said the banker, "let me speak to you a moment."

He drew the detective aside out of the hearing of the two conspirators and talked earnestly to him for five minutes. Then Dan Manly rejoined the others and made them a proposition to which Gabe acquiesced, though with rather a bad grace.

"How will I know ez you're squar' in this hyar thing?" he asked.

"Guess you will have to take chances," answered the detective, coolly.

"Yes, mein tear. Ve vill take chances," put in Sol Nugent.

"Shut yer mouth, yer fool!" again growled Gabe. Then, turning to the banker: "You will be back hyar in two hours with ther money, you say?"

"Yes," answered the detective, taking the reply upon himself.

"Better meet me somewhere else. This hyar place is too public ter suit me. I'll tell yer what ter do. Get a skiff down hyar on the river-bank, and row slowly up ther river above High Bridge. I'll be on ther watch, an' ez soon ez I see that everything is all right, I'll come out ter yer, close ther bargain—for my friend—and, show you whar ther gal is."

It is two hours later, and a boat with three persons is slowly working its way up the river above High Bridge.

The three persons are Vandeker Ward, Dan Manly and Tim Martin.

"There's the boat, be the powers, coming after us," remarked Tim, as he looked over his shoulder, and saw a skiff coming after them rapidly. "But, faix, there's only wan person in it."

"And that one a woman," exclaimed the detective.

"A woman! It cannot be—no, no! And yet—if it should be—" muttered the banker, incoherently.

"Mr. Ward, do not deceive yourself. It is not your daughter. Even in this dim light I can see that it is a much bigger woman," said the detective, gently, as he stopped rowing.

A few rapid strokes on the part of the solitary woman brought her boat level, and then, as the two light skiffs came side by side, the woman sprung up and jumped fairly into Tim Martin's lap.

"Tim!"

"Katie!"

"Och, ye tafe uv the worruld, phwat are yez doin' here, in the middle of the river in the middle of ther night, lavin' yer own woife to her own self, a-wapin' an'a-wailin' over yez? What d'ye m'ane?"

Katie Martin burst into a storm of sobs as she thus addressed her husband, and then her grief took a belligerent turn, as she tore at his hair, and shook him backward and forward so violently as to threaten to upset the boat.

"Katie, phwat are yez doin'? Don't be a fool!" expostulated Tim. "Yez are hurtin' my head."

"Och, Tim, phwy did yez do it?"

"Don't yez know Oi'm thryng to foind our gurrul, and ain't Oi here for that purpose?"

"Phwy, ye omadhaun, didn't ye know she was safe at home?"

"Phwat?" shrieked Tim.

"What!" echoed Dan and Mr. Ward simultaneously.

"Sure, it's the truth Oi'm tellin' yez. You, runnin' all 'bout the city an' Oi with the gurrul safe at home."

"Mrs. Martin, do I understand you to say that my daughter is at your home in Brooklyn?" asked Mr. Ward with forced calmness.

"Oi dunno phwat ye understand but that's the truth. Oi hov Mary Ward safe in the house, an' I hov been nearly all this blamed day a-lookin' for me husband."

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Mr. Ward, fervently. "We will go to her at once."

"No, no," interrupted the detective. "We have recovered your daughter, but it is our duty to entrap these two thieves, Gabe and Nugent. Will you not help me?"

The banker hesitated a moment. Then placing his hand in that of the young man he said: "Yes, I owe that much to you, at all events. But Mrs. Martin, you and your husband go back to Brooklyn and see that Marion is safe, will you not?"

"Yes, that will be the best plan," acquiesced the detective. "There being three persons in the boat might make those fellows suspicious, and we can attend to them by ourselves—eh, Mr. Ward?"

"Yes, or fifty like them," said the banker, and he meant what he said.

"Come, Tim. Git intel that boat, and row. Of am tolred, be it known to yez."

Mrs. Martin, thus saying, soon had her husband in the other boat, resting herself comfortably in the stern and waving her hand to the banker and detective as her husband lay to his work with a will and made the boat spin down the river in the direction of her home and Marion.

The Martins' boat had hardly disappeared, and Dan was slowly paddling up the river, when a boat shot out of the darkness and ran across the bows of that in which sat the detective and banker.

The strange skiff contained but one man, and as the moonlight fell upon his face, Dan saw that he was an utter stranger. His chin was covered by a heavy black beard, and long black hair hung down each side of his face from beneath a wide sombrero such as is seldom or never seen east of Kansas City, except in theaters or circuses. The rest of his costume, so far as the detective could make out in the gloom was that of a cowboy rather than a resident of New York City.

"What masquerading is this?" whispered the banker to Dan.

The young man laughed heartily, but silently;

"I'll show what it means in a few minutes," he whispered, almost choking with merriment. "What a shallow fool he is, after all."

The cowboy looked over his shoulder toward the banker's skiff, and then, with a dexterous manipulation of the oars, turned his own craft and ran alongside.

"Your name Ward?" he inquired, in abnormally gruff tones.

"Yes," answered the detective, imitating the voice of his interlocutor.

"Which one?"

"Both of us."

"Now, see hyar, young feller, I ain't got no time fer foolin'. I am hyar fer business, I am, an' I want ter know which is ther man ez I'm ter do business with. Now you hyar me!"

He had been holding the gunwale of the banker's skiff as he talked, and looking straight into Mr. Ward's face.

Had he been less intent on this he might have noticed that the detective was gradually edging nearer to him.

"What is your business?" asked the banker, quietly, returning the cowboy's gaze.

"I want ther money."

"What money?"

"Fer yer daughter."

"My daughter? Where is she?"

"Pay ther money an' you shall have her."

"You know where she is, then?"

"You bet!"

"You are the villain who abducted her, are you?" demanded the banker, his brow red with indignation.

"Oh, keep yer hair on. The question is whether yer hev ther money."

"Where is my daughter?"

of the detective, who reached not only for the hat but the hair of the Western terror. Both came off together, revealing to the pale-eyed moon the red, scrubby hair and bullet-head of Red Gabe, the tough.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHO HAS THE WHIP-HAND?

LET US FOLLOW Tim and Katie Martin to their home in Brooklyn.

"Oi'm glad to be home again," said Katie, as she knocked at the door of the little store on Myrtle Avenue, which was tightly closed and secured. "Oi'm glad Boggs has kept the house well fastened. Oi told him to keep himself awake and look after things, an' though he's a fool in some ways he can do without slape longer than any one I ever knew before."

While Katie was delivering herself of this peroration, she kept up a continuous hammering at the door.

"Phwat's the matter with Boggs, I wonder?" observed Tim, when they had stood at the door for at least ten minutes without any response.

Katie did not answer. She was looking through the keyhole into the interior of the store, which a gas-jet, full on, illuminated thoroughly.

"Phwat can yez see?" asked Tim,

Katie arose from her position at the keyhole and in a steady voice said:

"Tim, ye hev to break open that dure."

Tim was accustomed to obey his wife, and he set to work without question. It was his habit always to carry a few handy tools in his pocket, such as a chisel, a monkey wrench with a hammer attachment, and a few skeleton keys. He combined the business of a locksmith with his other employments, and although his wife had often warned him that he ran the risk of being arrested for a burglar if it was known that he traveled about the city with such a suspicious "kit" about his person, he always answered that he was not a burglar, never had been, never intended to be, and could easily prove it, he followed his own devices and carried his tools regularly. On this occasion they came in very handily.

Deftly he fitted the key to the lock and turned it. Then with the chisel, he forced back bolts at top and bottom—the more easily for that he knew just where they were situated—and opened the door.

At his first glance into the store he started back with a cry of astonishment and horror.

"Howly saints! Phwat's that?"

"Can't ye see phawt's it is?" responded his wife, impatiently. "Pick him up."

"Poor Boggs! He lay at full length upon the floor outside the counter and had been seen there by Mr. Martin when she looked through the key-hole.

"Faix, he's only fainted," muttered Tim, as he pulled the boy into a sitting posture.

"Phwat's that smell in the house? It makes me feel sick, so it does," said Katie.

"That's it. Oi hev it," responded Tim. "Sure it's chloroform that they hev guv to the boy. But Oi'll soon bring him around. Git some water."

But Katie was not by his side. She had flown to the little parlor as soon as she realized that Boggs had been dealt with foully, and called hurriedly to Marion.

No answer. Into the little bedroom she peeped. The bed was empty. Back to the parlor, into the little workshop, and then to the store again, where Boggs, under Tim's ministrations, and copious lavings with cold water, was now staring around him wildly, and trying to speak.

"Phwat's the matter, Boggs? Phwhere is Mary?" cried Katie, as she gave the boy a shake that assisted materially in bringing him to himself.

He was not equal to speech, however, for two or three minutes, during which Mrs. Martin told how she had found the parlor and bedroom empty, and not a vestige of her girl except the shawl she had worn when Boggs brought her home, and which, by the way, was the property of the old woman Marion always spoke of in horrified tones as Mother Collins.

Tim suddenly let go of Boggs, and if the boy had not been sufficiently recovered to support himself, he would have gone down with a vigorous thump. As it was he sat up, swaying to and fro, and opening his mouth at intervals, as if he might speak presently.

"Phwhere do yez think she has gone, Katie?" asked Tim, as he tried to collect his own wits as well as those of the swaying Boggs.

"How should Oi know? Maybe Oi'll foind out whin Oi can git some sinse until this boy," replied Katie, impatiently, as she gave Boggs another shake, that made his teeth rattle like hailstones upon a skylight.

"Mother—Collins!" gasped Boggs, at this juncture, with an effort.

"Yes, yes," said Katie, eagerly.

"Mother—Collins!" repeated Boggs, in whose throat the two words seemed to stick to the exclusion of any others.

"Och, the devil take the ould woman! Faith an' Oi've heerd uv her!" remarked Tim.

"Mother—Collins!" said Boggs for the third time.

"Yes—go on."

"Took—her—away—and—"

"Yes, phwy didn't ye stop her?"

"Sh—she—drugged—me—and—I—couldn't."

"Droogged yez? How cu'd she do that without ye lettin' her?"

"She—threw—pepper—in—my—eyes—and—then—put—a—wet—sponge—over—my—mouth—and—nose—and—"

Boggs was not in good physical condition yet, and he stopped, breathless, with his mouth open, like some curious fish out of water.

"Go on wid yez."

"Yes—Katie—I—will—I—was—dizzy—but—just—before—I—fell—down—I—saw—her—take—Mar—out—and—put—her—into—a—carriage—and—drive—away."

"Boggs, brace yerself up! Brace up, for the love of Heaven!" pleaded Katie as she knelt down in front of the boy, and made him drink a glass of water that she took from a pitcher on the counter which had already taken a prominent part in his revival at the hands of Tim.

Boggs swallowed the water, and then taking Mrs. Martin's proffered arm, arose to his feet, and bravely staggered up and down the store, and then to the door, where the night breeze could play across his forehead.

"I—am—better—now."

"Tim," said Katie, in her usual imperious manner, "bring me a carriage. We are going to foind our gurrul to-night, afore we slape."

Tim did not need any second bidding. In half an hour, he and his wife with Boggs, who had now recovered considerably from the effects of the drug, were on their way toward the liquor warehouse, in New York, where the boy thought it probable Mother Collins had taken her prisoner.

The house was dark and silent, as it had been on the night that Marion was taken there by the tough and handed over to the tender mercies of Mother Collins.

Stepping down from the seat by the side of the driver where he had ridden for the double reason that he could direct the way and get the benefit of the night air, Boggs, who was now himself again, went direct to the iron cellar door, and pulled at the iron ring by which it could be lifted.

To his immeasurable surprise, the door yielded and came up easily.

Tim and Katie were both at his side, while the driver of the carriage, a particular friend of the Martins, and who was very deaf, sat in the doorway of his carriage, with his feet on the curbstone, watching the proceedings with only the faintest curiosity expressed in his countenance. He was known as one of the most nonchalant men that ever guided a horse in New York's streets.

Tim had a revolver in his hand, and Katie had another. They had provided themselves with these weapons, from the stock of the store at Boggs's suggestion, and both were resolved to use them without hesitation if such a course became necessary to rescue Marion. As for Boggs he had the blacksmith's hammer mentioned before, which was a handy weapon that he could wield without trouble, and that would be very effective in his hands.

"Let's—go—down."

"Oi'm wid yez," responded Tim. "Katie, ye had better shtay up here."

"Indade and Oi'll not! Oi'm goin' to foind me grrul if she's down here."

Tim chuckled.

"Oi knew it. Oi jist wanted ter hear phwat ye'd say."

"Don't be a fule," was Katie's response, as she went boldly down the stone steps in advance of her companion, and walked along the dark hall toward the kitchen, the door of which was closed as usual.

Boggs and Tim followed closely on her heels, and then, without stopping to make signals, or beg for admittance, threw themselves against the door together and burst it open.

One look was enough to show them that the apartment was empty.

"Come—on. There—is—another—way—out—somewhere," cried Boggs, who remembered what Marion had told him about the way by which she had been taken from the kitchen to the damp cellar from which he had rescued her.

Through the door at the end of the kitchen, and thence to the cellar that had been Marion's prison did Boggs lead Tim and Katie, having previously lighted a lantern that hung against the wall, the counterpart of that which he had used to show Marion the way.

But not a sign of a living creature except the rats that rustled and hustled away as the light from the lamp fell upon their holes and corners.

"Boggs, what do yez mean be bringing us down here to this dirty hole whin there's no one here?" asked Katie.

"Well—find—her," answered Boggs, quietly.

They were in the kitchen again now, and the boy had been looking about the room. Suddenly he pounced upon a piece of white muslin and lace lying on the floor near the stove. He held it up and showed it to be a dainty white apron, which Katie Martin recognized at once.

"It is Mary's, so it is," she cried, as she snatched it from the boy's hand.

"Yes. That—shows—she—has—been—here," answered Boggs. "Come—on!"

He evinced as much excitement as his face ever showed as he led the way up the cellar steps and into the street again, where the driver still sat in the doorway of his carriage, with his feet on the curbstone, as cool and comfortable as if he had been at his own fireside.

"Jump—in!" commanded Boggs, who had now taken charge of the expedition entirely.

Tim and Katie obeyed, and the boy, mounting to his old seat, signed to the driver to turn into Broadway and drive up-town as fast as his horses could travel.

The rumble of the wheels had hardly died away when the iron cellar door was cautiously lifted a few inches, and the large, red face of Mother Collins ap-

peared in the opening, with a malevolent grin contorting the features and rendering it almost like that of a devil incarnate.

"So, so, my young man, yer thought yer could ketch me, did yer? I wish I had done what I had a mind ter do when I put the sponge ter yer nose—shut yer wind off altogether. It would hev been a great deal more satisfactory. But I wuz allers soft-hearted, more's the pity! I never do what I should, in justice to myself, or I'd be better off now!"

She closed the iron cellar door as she thus muttered to herself, bolting it carefully ere she descended the steps and made her way along the dark hall to the kitchen.

"Now, yer hussy! I'll keep yer now till ye'r paid for. Don't yer make no mistake!" she exclaimed, as she went to a certain spot near the stove, and pushed back a panel in the wainscoting.

No one could have detected the presence of a door at this place without previous knowledge, especially when such an arrangement was not suspected, as it certainly was not by Boggs and the Martins.

A little closet was revealed by the removal of the sliding-door, in which there was room for not more than three or four people.

"Come out er that, d'y'e hear?" snapped Mother Collins.

She did not wait for her behest to be obeyed. She thrust her hand into the darkness of the closet, and pulled Marion Ward into the kitchen with such force that she threw her to the floor.

"Git up!" she yelled. "None o' yershamming, pretendin' ye'r sick. I know better."

"Git up, I tell yer!"

She seized Marion by the wrist, and shook her so violently that her hair fell about her face in a golden shower as she sunk panting upon a chair.

Mother Collins looked at her contemptuously, and then stalked up and down the kitchen, as she muttered to herself:

"Suppose there'll be trouble when Red Gabe finds out she's gone. Maybe I ought ter take her back ter her crib up ther river. But I dunno. So long ez Gabe gits ther money I don't keer. I'll make him give me my share afore I tell him whar she is. Maybe it's better ez it is. Ef it wuzn't fer me she'd be gone, anyhow. In the mean time, I'll get even with her fer her trouble she's give me."

She went to a corner of the kitchen and took from it a flexible ratan, such as a pedagogue of the old school would have delighted to use upon his pupils.

"Now, my lady, look out!" she hissed, as she swung the cane over her head with a cruel swish.

"What are you going to do—not whip me?" cried the girl, in an agony of terror.

"That's just what I'm er-goin' ter do, an' don't you forget it!" was the vicious reply.

Mother Collins was in earnest. She raised the ratan and brought it down with all her force. It struck the chair in which the girl was sitting, narrowly missing her shoulder, at which it was aimed.

"Cuss yer, I'll do it this time!"

Again the ratan whirled above her head. Marion involuntarily bowed her head to receive the blow, when there was a sudden bustle behind the old woman, a crash, and Mother Collins was prostrate on the floor, while Boggs, with his fist clinched, was examining his knuckles and wiping off the blood.

"I—hit—her—in—the—teeth!" he exclaimed, as Katie Martin threw her arms around the girl's neck, and told her husband not to speak to her for five minutes.

"Oh, Katie!"

"Oh, Mary!"

"Oh—my—knuckles!" muttered Boggs.

CHAPTER XIV.

RED GABE'S LAST CARD.

WHEN Vandeker Ward found himself on the boat with the cowboy, who had been revealed by Dan Manly to be no other than Red Gabe, his first impulse was to fly at the throat of the tough.

An ugly-looking revolver in Gabe's breast, while he rowed rapidly toward the shore, showed the banker that resistance just then was hopeless.

The tough had stuck the revolver in the front of his shirt, with the butt ready to his hand, and seizing both oars, sent the boat spinning toward the shore, keeping his eyes open not only for any belligerent movement on the part of Vandeker Ward, but for the appearance of Double-Curve Dan, who had disappeared in the darkness when the boats parted company.

"I'll hev ter burry afore thet durned cuss ketches on," muttered Gabe, inaudibly. "Once git this hyar rooster inter ther house an' I don't care. Git out now!" he added aloud to Mr. Ward, as the boat ran up on the sludgy bank.

The oars had been dropped and the pistol was pointed straight at the banker's head.

"Hands up! None o' yer fooling!" went on the tough. "I ain't takin' no chances on yer, an' ef yer hev ther money in yer clothes, ez yer said yer hev, I'd just ez soon hev yer dead ez alive. An' I mean what I say."

The banker felt his choler rising, but he did not reply. He only obeyed. As he stepped out of the boat into the mud, Gabe arose and followed him, with his pistol still ready for prompt action.

A low whistle from the tough brought a small stooping figure down the bank out of the darkness. The figure was wrapped in a long army overcoat several sizes too large, and a soft felt hat was slouched over its face, but Mr. Ward recognized it at once as that of Sol Nugent, in spite of the disguise.

"Take him ter ther crib. Walk by the side uv

him. I'll follow. Ef he tries any monkey bizness, blow his brains out."

Sol only nodded as he drew a formidable six-shooter from a pocket of his overcoat. He seemed to labor under the delusion that no one could penetrate his disguise unless he spoke.

A few steps brought them to the old frame house near the railroad, to which the reader has already been introduced, and which presented about the same appearance inside as it did when they took Boggs and Marion both as prisoners.

"Shut ther door, Sol," commanded Red Gabe, as soon as they were inside, as if he did not care to keep up the fiction of the old man being some one else any longer.

The outer door was locked and bolted, and the tough motioned to Mr. Ward to sit upon the stool that had erstwhile been occupied by Montgomery Boggs.

"Go through him for weapons, Sol."

In spite of the banker's indignant protestations, Sol took from his prisoner's pockets a pistol—the only weapon he had—and a well-filled pocketbook, at sight of which the eyes of the two ruffians glistened with cupidity.

"Now we air all comfortable, like, and we kin git down ter bizness," observed Gabe. "But, I guess we'll go to the other room, whar we will be quiet an' sort o' private. What d'y'e say, Mr. Ward?"

Now, getting matters arranged in his own way, Gabe was disposed to be jocular in his heavy style, and he grinned at the banker with a screwing up of his mean little eyes that made that gentleman long to knock his brains out.

"I do not care where we go. All I want is my child."

"Zackly. An' you shall hev her, when yer hev paid fer her."

"Where is she?"

"Oh, she's all right," was the evasive reply. "Sol, you bring that gun. I'll carry ther pocket-book."

As the three walked into the combine of kitchen and bedroom, the door of which was immediately closed and secured by the obsequious Sol, Mr. Ward looked anxiously about for Marion, but, it is needless to say, in vain.

He was given a chair at a large round table, upon which Gabe placed the pocketbook, while both he and his partner held their cocked revolvers ready for action in case of a belligerent movement on the part of the man they intended to rob.

"Now, see hyar, Mr. Ward! We want the money you promised to give us for your daughter," commenced Gabe.

"Promised you? Why, you told me that night at the gardens of High Bridge, that you were only the agent of the real abductor of my daughter."

Gabe frowned.

"Thet wuz a little perlite fiction. I am ther man ez hez got yer daughter, an' it is ter me that yer must pay ther money."

"Well?"

"Wal! What d'y'e keep on saying 'Wal' for? Whar's ther money?"

"You have the pocketbook there."

"Ther pocket-book? Yer don't mean ter say ez all the sum is in the ther?"

"Why not? Coupon bonds, payable to bearer, can be put in a very small space."

"Thet's so. Let's look."

The tough tore open the pocket-book, and as his eye caught the figures, "\$50,000" on the engrossed paper, with its green trimmings, he chuckled in a highly satisfied way. He opened out the bonds, counted them to make sure that there were fifty of them, and then folding them up, replaced them in the pocketbook, and put the pocketbook itself into his pocket.

Sol Nugent watched the proceeding with a rather long face, and the banker calmly waited for the next move.

"Now, Mr. Ward, that you've paid over ther money," resumed Gabe, "I—"

"Will give me a receipt, I suppose," suggested Mr. Ward, finishing the sentence for him.

"Ther best receipt I kin give yer will be yer daughter, won't it?"

"Yes, yes," eagerly.

"Ahl! Well! Wait a few minutes while I decide ez ter ther way I'll do it."

The banker was sitting with his face toward the door communicating with the outer room, Gabe and Nugent being unable to see it from their positions.

At about the time the tough was counting the Government bonds, the banker thought he saw the door move slightly.

He kept on talking to Gabe as carelessly as he could, but his eyes were fixed on the door.

Yes, surely, the door was slowly opening!

The tough was busy counting the bonds, and Sol Nugent was watching the operation with the deepest interest.

Wider and wider opened the door, and just as the tough requested Mr. Ward to wait a few moments, there was a bang, and Double-Curve Dan with one sweep of his right arm, had sent Nugent to the floor and turned to attack Gabe.

The banker, who was prepared for the onslaught by the detective, threw himself upon Sol and tried to hold him back from helping the tough, but, old man as he was, Sol was both sinewy and active. Partly by accident, assisted by his knowledge of wrestling, he managed to overturn the banker, and kneeling on his chest, thrust the muzzle of his revolver into his face, with the remark:

"Keep quiet, mein tear, or I will blow your brains out."

In the mean time Double-Curve Dan and Gabe

were locked in each other's arms, both held too closely to admit of a weapon being used.

"It's no use, Gabe. The game's up," said the detective, breathlessly, as they stopped tugging at each other for a moment to gather strength for a renewal of the struggle.

"Is it? Cuss yer! Not yet! I've hed it in fer you for a long time. An' when you pitched that game ther other day that settled it. So now, look out!"

With a tremendous effort the tough slowly forced Double-Curve Dan back upon the table, holding him in a grasp of iron.

"What are you going to do?" asked the detective, although as he looked into the relentless, shifty little eyes of his adversary, he knew that the question was superfluous.

"I'm er goin' ter kill yer. Thet's what I'm er goin' ter do."

He drew a bowie-knife that he had secured from Sol after his own had been thrown over the precipice at the gardens, and amused himself by pricking the detective's cheek slightly, so as to draw blood. There seemed no bounds to his greedy, murderous hate.

"Afore I finish yer, Double-Curve Dan, I want ter tell you and that feller over ther who owns a bank but can't find his daughter, that I don't know whar she is, an' that he just throwed his money away on me. I believe she's drowned."

An awful cry from the banker proved that the shot had told, and the tough grinned in intense enjoyment of the agony he had caused.

Then, taking a firmer hold on Dan, he would doubtless have carried out his expressed intention of stabbing him to the heart but for one circumstance.

This circumstance was nothing less than the tough being seized by two pairs of strong hands and thrown upon the floor so suddenly that he had not time even to swear.

In an instant Double-Curve Dan had snatched the knife, and, stooping over him, had deftly snapped a pair of bright steel handcuffs upon his wrists.

"I ought to have done this long ago, and would had I known as much about you as I do now," observed the detective coolly.

"Oh, mein tear! Don'd be so rough with me, I'm a poor old man. It was not my fault—not my fault."

"Oh, bedad, yez are a bad wan, so yezare. Faix, O'll kill yez!"

Katie Martin was alternately shaking Sol Nugent and striking him upon the head with the butt of his revolver that she had secured as she sprang upon him, while her husband and Montgomery Boggs were giving their attention to Gabe.

It was several minutes before Mr. Ward could realize that a rescue had taken place, and he does not understand to this day exactly how it all was. But as he thanked Boggs and the Martins, one after the other, his eyes wandered anxiously and sorrowfully about the room.

"My daughter—my Marion! Does not any one know where she is?"

He saw, as through a mist, Katie Martin look toward the door, and Montgomery Boggs widening in one of his awe-inspiring grins. Then there was a glad cry from somewhere, and Marion was locked in her father's arms.

"Father!"

"My child!"

It is unnecessary to explain just how the Martins, Boggs, and Marion happened to be in the old boat-house at such an opportune moment. The preceding events led up to it, and the outcome was what might have been expected.

Marion and her father are still living in the house at West Twentieth street, and Dan Manly is a constant visitor there. What the attraction is is not for us to say, but certain it is that Marion's cheek flushes and her eye seems to grow brighter when the handsome young man comes, and the housemaid gives it as her opinion that "them two is almost steady company now," whatever that may mean.

Red Gabe, Sol Nugent and Mother Collins are all rusticating in Sing Sing Prison. It was proved by Dan Manly that they were all members of an organized gang of thieves and blackmailers that the police had long been trying to unearth, so their sentences to the Penitentiary are for good long terms, giving them plenty of time for reflection, and, let us hope, repentance.

Tim and Katie Martin are doing a good business in odd musical instruments at their old stand on Myrtle avenue, Brooklyn, and Montgomery Boggs, with his wages raised materially, works hard every day, and is higher in the favor of his employers than ever. All three go over to see Mr. Ward and his daughter occasionally; while, as for Double-Curve Dan, he is very often in the little store talking music and base-ball with Tim, the two being the closest friends, and always finding a subject for amusement in the extraordinary suspicions entertained of the young man by Tim and Marion in the long ago.

There is a new pitcher, who made a sensation at the ball-fields in Brooklyn a few weeks ago by his extraordinarily effective delivery, which comprised a double curve, that experts say was never seen before, save from the hands of one man. Montgomery Boggs is the new pi'cher, and he only chuckles when he hears the comments upon his playing, but it is pretty generally understood that he learned the trick from that phenomenal pitcher known to the whole base-ball world by the sobriquet of Double-Curve Dan.

THE END.

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